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Closed Minds and Open Systems: Narrative Voice and Institutional Complexity in the Late
Modern Novel

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DEDICATION

To

the memory of Lisa Lew

for whom I try to live every day.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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This dissertation tracks the coevolution of narrative and social forms in the twentieth century British and American novels, as their respective societies developed gradually more financialized economies and sophisticated modes of surveillance and information control. To do so, it draws on social-cognitive narratology, sociology, philosophy of language, and Marxist approaches to narrative, tracing the connection between fictional representations of individual language, collective intentionality, and the institutional structures that these ground. The overall goal is less to pursue determinate questions than to follow an ongoing process – the attempts of novelists to create prose capable of assimilating and responding to their rapidly evolving institutional landscapes. This is not to say the project lacks theoretical import: once the dialogue between a given set of social conditions and its narrative representation have been explicated, the details may be used to interrogate established aesthetic categories (I think in particular of some received definitions of modernist and postmodernist narrative), and to shed light on rhetorical considerations that these authors see as emergent from representational concerns.

We begin in the liminally modern setting of Faulkner's 1920s Mississippi. In the last two sections of *The Sound and the Fury*, institutional and economic forms remain totally incommensurable, a contrast matched by the chapter's dissonant narrative voices. Fitzgerald, representing later and more sophisticated social forms, shows more conciliation: in *Tender Is the Night*, the narrator's voice internalizes the sort of drama that rives Faulkner's text. *The Human Factor* does this one better. To represent voices and social structures that have grown formalized, Greene both nests stories and shows official languages invading characters' psyches. Greene's voice employs the sclerotic language of 1970s government bureaucracy in order to explore such adoption as a mode of resistance. Finally, Wallace extends Greene's formalization, depicting an institution so involuted and all-encompassing that attempts to represent it pull voice toward two extremes: infinite proliferation and obsessive self-reflexivity.

Introduction

Narrative Voice, Institutional Language, and the Social Structure of Late Modernity

I. Asymmetries

This dissertation, saltatory organization and extensive digressions notwithstanding, proceeds from the desire to explain a simple asymmetry, one that emerges when we compare the two passages that follow. The first, which occurs near the conclusion of Conrad's *Nostromo*, shows the titular captain considering a suicide from which he ultimately relents:

The incomparable Nostromo, the Capataz, the respected and feared Captain Fidanza, the unquestioned oracle of secret societies, a republican like old Giorgio, and a revolutionist at heart (but in another manner), was in the point of jumping overboard from the deck of his own schooner. The man, subjective almost to insanity, looked suicide deliberately in the face. But he never lost his head. He was checked by the thought that this was no escape. He imagined himself dead, and the disgrace, the shame going on. (376-7)

Conrad's scene represents a potential suicide, yet the vocabulary remains remarkably external. We see less Gianbattista Fidanza at his lowest than a recitation of his social roles ("the Captaz" "respected and feared," "oracle of secret societies"). For Langland, this listing "limits any internal view of [Nostromo's] mind" (Langland 368), but that judgment comes prematurely in the case of a man who avoids suicide in the name of "disgrace." If we read *Nostromo* himself as slightly more vain, and Conrad's narrating voice as slightly more acute, then the paratactic social

tags listed above might be read as the narrator's free-indirect gloss on Nostromo's *own* thoughts, rather than the externalized judgment of an omniscient voice. And in this former case, the focalization around Nostromo's socially conscious thought reveals him to be (somewhat surprisingly) in thrall to the social groups from whom these accolades stem – the poor folk of Sulaco.

With Conrad's example in place, we may turn to a case from David Foster Wallace, that of a character recalling her time at a local mental hospital. She describes conversation with her caretakers as follows: "It was like you weren't a human being, you were a piece of machinery they could take apart and figure out how it worked....It was really scary, actually, because they could sign papers to keep you in there or move you to a worse ward" (*TPK* 471). Like Conrad's mariner, Wallace's examiner worries over the judgment of other social groups. But the parallels stop there. Nostromo fears what he understands – the generalized contagion that might attend a change in the will of a group he knows well. Further, he (and the focal narrating voice that attends his thoughts) knows their *language*. Meredith Rand faces a different problem: Her interlocutors are at once invested with frightening organizational powers ("because they could sign papers") and totally inscrutable ("like you weren't a human being"). As Wallace's comparison of these official interrogators to "machine[s]" suggests, they are driven by a still mental, yet decidedly non-human set of imperatives; hence Rand has no understanding of how their questions relate to her subjective experience. While in institutional custody, however, she begins to feel the pressure of its language on her own thoughts: "I was having all these dreams about different kinds of machinery, with gears and dials" (*TPK* 488). Nostromo knows the sociolect of his interlocutors (he thinks of himself fondly in the same language), whereas for Rand such language appears only as an impending nightmare.

When crystallized into a formalized institution, the familiar social minds like those of *Nostramo* become the threatening, incomprehensible, invasive force of *The Pale King*. If there are central questions that this dissertation sets out to investigate, they may be phrased as follows: How, and by what stages, does this process occur? Further, how do issues of fictional representation attend the underlying social and psychic shifts that cause it? And what rhetorical or philosophical stances or moves push authors away from the mindset of the first example and toward that of the second?

II. Cognitive Narratology and Its Gaps

As so much of the essays that follow will be concerned with moving beyond the flaws or gaps within the “social minds” approach to cognitive narratology, we should first spend some time noting what it gets *right*. The “externalist perspective” outlined by Alan Palmer in *Social Minds in the Novel* marks a shift within cognitive approaches to literature. According to Palmer, most narratology, cognitivist reading, and psychologically inflected approaches to literary study adopt an internalist view of the mind, stressing “those aspects that are inner, introspective, private, solitary, individual, psychological, mysterious, and detached” (*Social Minds* 39). And, given the ascendancy of the Freudian model of mind and psychoanalytically inflected literary interpretations over the last century, Palmer’s assessment seems largely accurate. Narrative theory especially has found itself preoccupied with “free indirect discourse, stream of consciousness, and interior monologue” (39). By contrast, Palmer (and critics in his vein) adopt an “externalist perspective” on mind, meaning a focus on those aspects of mind that are “outer, active, public, social, behavioral...embodied, and engaged” – to which list I would add (crucially) *socially extended* (39).

The most useful innovation of Palmer's study (and a tool on which this dissertation will rely heavily) is his typology of social minds, a method for categorizing socially extended action and thought as they carry across narratologically relevant groups. At the lowest level of intermental connection, we find the loose and temporary association of the "Intermental Encounter," which can include everyday interactions where persons have a heightened awareness of others' behavior and thoughts. One step beyond this, we find "small intermental units," longer-standing associations between small groups (marriages, close friendships, nuclear families) whose members typically have a greater familiarity with one another's thoughts and feelings, and tend to act accordingly; though there are (obviously) substantial variations within this category. The next category comprises "medium-sized intermental units" (work colleagues, friend networks, some neighborhoods), with a general sharing of opinion and less detailed intersubjectivity. The largest grouping ("large intermental minds") ranges across groups that create opinions or consensus; they tend to be associated via location and political ideology (Palmer's standard examples are "Society" in Austen's *Bath*). Finally, with a category that spans across several of the preceding categories, we have "intermental minds," close intersubjective associations that are so long-standing and consistent "they can plausibly be considered group minds": members of these groups know each other's minds well and work together in joint action, decision making, and deliberation. (47-8). Palmer's toolkit proves particularly effective for his extended analyses of the medium and large-scale minds of certain socioeconomic groups in *Middlemarch* and *Little Dorrit*.

Having laid out the areas in which Palmer's theory applies, I would now like to move on to the points where it falls short; these include moments of conceptual error and (more pointedly) actual categorical lacunae. The first of these problematic moments arises from a contradiction

between two of Palmer's claims about the externalist perspective that drives his analysis. On the one hand, he asserts that the "externalist perspective" his analysis adopts includes among its marks an emphasis on "Bakhtinian dialogicality," yet on the other, he takes care to note that any discussion of ideology (the central feature of Bakhtin's dialogue) lies "well beyond the scope" of his study (48). I realize that this critique lies in part with the methodological limits of narratology itself, which often contents itself with narrow, technical insights; that said, Palmer's study would nonetheless benefit from the adoption of a more socially grounded lens – an account that includes both the sources of the "dialogue" to which he alludes in the above claim, and a theoretical tool that might ground it.

To the extent that the theoretical toolkit needs an expansion, I believe that would be satisfied by introducing the concept of voice, as understood by psychologist James Wertsch – not just a given character's "speaking consciousness" (Wertsch 12), but a term capable of carrying across both narrative and psychological analyses, addressing both narrator and narrated. As Stephen Ross writes, voice as a critical concept allows us to "speak simultaneously" of "both a property of the discourse we read and as a part of the world we read about and imagine" (Ross 4). Voice has value as analytic tool largely because human thought and action are, as Vygotsky and Bakhtin have partly shown, discursively constructed; and thus, focusing on voice allows us to examine the "semiotic devices used to mediate such action" and thought (Wertsch 13). Speech genres, or modes of thought and language, attach to different psychological and social sources. Further, having an account of the different sources and types of language (what Bakhtin calls speech genres) present in character speech, thought, or even moments of narration, will permit us to trace the etiology of that character's usage; the social and psychic forces that imping on his or her thought and action (Wertsch 13).

Insofar as the readings that follow depart from Palmer's more narrow, technical project, they do so by recognizing that the languages present in these primary texts cannot be analyzed in the absence of the social circumstances in which they arise: As Vološinov writes, "*the forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interaction,*" and so reading cultural artifacts will mean attending to their ideological details and stakes (MPL 21). For this reason, each of the chapters that follows will attempt to examine the formal aspects of a set of narrative texts with an attention to the social discourses that surround them and the potential ways in which different social and institutional entities might exert force or influence on each of the narrating voices involved.

Where my first critique (or modification) of Palmer's work is methodological, the second is ontological. After the extensive explications of nineteenth century British novels that comprise the majority of his text, Palmer includes the following remarks on twentieth and twenty-first century narrative:

The modernist novel is characterized by a move away from the heterodiegetic narration that is typical of the realist novel and toward an experimental and expressionistic emphasis on subjectivity, inner states of consciousness, and fragmentary and discontinuous character construction. These sound like deeply internalist preoccupations. And my guess is that, when the companion volume to this one comes to be written on the twentieth-and twenty-first century novel, the presence of social minds will be found to be much patchier than in the nineteenth century....[It]should be stressed that the absence of social minds is as significant as their presence. If social minds in twentieth-and twenty-

first century fiction are fractured, attenuated, or even absent, then that in itself is an important fact. (*Social Minds* 184).

While I have no quarrel with the notion that the sorts of social groupings which Palmer's study follows have a more fraught and partial presence in the literature of the last century or so, the notion that socially organized cognition, or socially organized mental units, disappeared in these more recent narratives is simply too restrictive. A series of questions comes to mind: What of the formalized entities into which social minds organize themselves and their actions? What of the institutions whose influences and deontic gravity saturate modern social existence? To put it bluntly, Palmer's social ontology needs expanding.

III. New Tools

My critique here has two aims: First, to add to Palmer's social minds framework an account of language-use that at once respects textual phenomenology and links that language to wider social phenomena. Second, to supplement the social-cognitive typology of intermental minds and units by including a mechanism for discussing formalized social phenomena that possess many of the characteristics of intermental units – namely, institutions.¹ And the best framework I have found for achieving these two goals is that presented by the philosopher John Searle, especially as articulated in his 2010 study *Making the Social World*. Searle's account relies heavily on his long-established theories of intentionality and speech acts, according to which individuals or groups may perform certain actions or express collective intentions simply by uttering or writing certain words under certain conditions (Searle, *EM* 18). In turn, these same

¹ This is not to say that narrative theory has neglected institutions entirely: *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, for instance, has an entire section on them. However, these investigations have thus far confined themselves almost entirely to the study of formalized real-world organizations, with little consideration of fictional representation or alternate definitions (Linde 243-7).

groups (or in certain cases, individuals) may create “institutional facts” by performing certain speech acts under certain conditions.

Institutional facts, on this account are those that involve deontic powers: “powers such as those of rights, duties, obligations, requirements, authorizations” (*Making* 91). The connection between the status-function declaration that creates an institutional fact and the source of the ontology should by now be clear enough: for an institutional fact to have any legitimacy for a social group, it must supervene on a “collectively recognized deontology” for that group (*Making* 92). And given that, within a modern and heavily institutionalized society, such facts will agglutinate to a huge scale, the creation of new institutional or social facts (and hence social entities) becomes commonplace, almost unnoticed. As Searle puts it, “[W]e live in a sea of human institutional facts” (90) without typically being aware of them. Crucially, institutional facts and entities depend for their continued influence and existence on the collective belief and acknowledgement of the persons enmeshed in their deontic power-relations: Institutions and “institutional facts...require continued recognition or acceptance because they exist only as long as they are so recognized or accepted” (103). Absent the continued belief and endorsement of their deontic powers (signified typically by the widespread employment of institutional terms), institutions may change or even collapse entirely. “Social change,” Searle continues, “often occurs when institutions are no longer accepted, when the system of status functions simply collapses,” with an obvious case being the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 (140).

Ubiquitous though they may be, there exists a distinct category of institutional facts (really institutionally created entities) that have particular interest for the narrative analytic I have proposed: Corporations. My interest here lies less in the legal or historical details of corporations than in their ontological and social peculiarities. As Searle defines them, these

institutional entities may be created whole cloth with the simple performance of the right sort of (written) speech act under the right conditions: “The law does not say that some preexisting X becomes a corporation; rather, it says that...the performance of these written speech acts...*counts as* the creation of a corporation” (SM 98). Simply by signing and filing certain paperwork, a person may add a new institutional entity to the world’s ontological roster. More interesting than the paper-based act of creation itself is the set of obligations and relationships that arise thereafter: “The creation of a corporation produces an immensely complex deontology involving interrelationships of many people” (98). Institutional entities such as corporations exert social and legal pressures on those around them; they influence persons and groups, disseminate their own conceptual vocabularies, and shape the voices around them. What matters is less the existence of special sorts of entities than the relationships they create: “the whole point of the creation of institutional reality is not to invest objects or people with some special status...but to create and regulate power relationships between people” and groups (106). However, as philosopher Raimo Tuomela takes pains to demonstrate, these power relations need not derive solely from the process of formalized declaration that Searle outlines here; they may also arise more informally, evolving out of informal events or practices involving social norms. Tuomela offers the example of a Sunday evening football match between friends that evolves from a spontaneous occurrence to a more regular one, and finally a “social expectation,” a formal event with rules, norms, and expectations (Tuomela 298).² Institutionally saturated power relations often appear in subtle forms.

² Tuomela outlines a hierarchy of social institutions, arranged by the force and rigidity of their obligations. At the highest level are rigid organizations with notions of position and a “task-right system” (299); at the bottom of the scale, we find instead “norm-governed social practices” which, under certain circumstances may evolve into orders that confer new “conceptual and social status” (299).

And it is for the purpose of observing and analyzing these tacit forms of social influence that narrative tools prove uniquely useful. As Wertsch demonstrates, the conceptual reach of voice extends beyond the influence of person-to-person interactions:

In contrast to the multivoicedness that grows out of the interanimation of concrete utterances in the ‘primordial dialogue of discourse,’ ...utterances appropriate *types* of voices, specifically those that appear in the forms of speech genres and social languages. By focusing on speech genres as mediational means, one is constantly reminded that mediated action is inextricably linked to historical, cultural, and institutional settings, and that the social origins of individual mental functioning extend beyond the level of intermental functioning. Because utterances inevitably invoke a speech genre, it is no longer possible to view dialogue in terms of two localized voices (Wertsch 144).

Here Wertsch’s argument includes voices that extend beyond the interpersonal (or intermental). Simply put, if the chosen speech-form present in a person (or character’s) reported speech or thought can be traced back to an institutional source, then the dialogue involved occurs between an individual (or potentially a larger group) and a non-human social entity – a new category of social influence and interaction, with its own dialogic contours and lines of influence.

If this seems abstract or disconnected from the textual examples with which this introduction began, we may now turn back to one with new tools in hand. Wallace’s Meredith Rand, describing her mental hospital induction, begins as follows:

‘It’s like they do this initial intake interview, with a legal form on a white clipboard they ask you questions as required by law, and if they ask you if you ever hear voices and you say sure, I hear yours right now asking me a question, they don’t think it’s funny or even

acknowledge you're even trying to be funny but just sit there looking at you. Like they're a computer and you can't proceed until you give the properly formatted answer.' (*TPK* 469)

The dialogue involved shows a disjunction between the young Rand's attempts to treat her interviewer as an ordinary interlocutor (another person), and the institutional imperatives enacted by the interviewer. Rand sees her interviewer in interpersonal terms, and adjusts her speech accordingly by making a joke. A joke which fails because humor and irony have no place in the institutionally-defined parameters of the intake interview; even the interviewer's affect remains mechanically flat. Rand's error (and one that she corrects as the novel proceeds) lies in seeing (and addressing) hospital employees as persons, rather than agents of institutional force. The case of Rand's hospital interlocutors is an extreme one, but subtler versions of this same pattern arise throughout the novels considered in this dissertation.

IV. (Late) Modernity's Institutional Life

The account of social institutions I have presented thus far has been largely abstract – drawn from a philosophical literature which aims to limn the broadest outlines of their social ontology. I have leaned on Searle's theorization as a tool for expanding the aperture of certain areas in narrative theory; but with those concerns now initially addressed, we may adopt a more socially focused lens, one more germane for examining the actual, twentieth-century institutions that appear in the novels this dissertation studies. This is not to abandon the account laid out earlier; rather, the specific modern institutions that follow may be viewed as a subset of Searle's much wider-ranging definitions. In particular, I have in mind the theory of modernity elaborated

by British social theorist Anthony Giddens starting with his 1990 study *Modernity and Its Consequences*.

For Giddens, modernity itself cannot be semantically disentangled from its institutions: he defines it as “the institutions and modes of behavior established first of all in post-feudal Europe, but which in the twentieth century increasingly have become world-historical in their impact” (*Modernity and Self-Identity* 15). Giddens defines four central “institutional dimensions” of life in modern nation-states: industrialism, capitalism, surveillance, and control of the means of violence. The first, “industrialism,” really has to do with the development and deployment of science and technology, as well as the social transformations that attend those material changes; although associated closely with market demand, Giddens separates them in order to highlight technology’s links to other institutional forces (15). The second dimension, capitalism, with its drive to expand, is “the most significant driving force of [social change]” (Giddens and Pierson 97). The third, “surveillance,” derives from Michel Foucault’s use of the term, and refers to “the supervisory control of subject populations”; this can take the form of “visible supervision [of behavior] in Foucault’s sense,” or may have more to do with the state-sanctioned methods for control of information (*Modernity* 15). The fourth and final dimension is “control of the means of violence” (15). While this has the obvious connotation of military force, it extends also to the state’s deployment of police power and overlaps in numerous ways with the surveillance practices. Each of the chapters that follows will (though often not in these terms) deal with the interactions and evolutions of these four institutional dimensions; however, before proceeding to those arguments, we should pause to note three additional features of late-modern institutional life.

Giddens defines these features as not so much institutions in themselves as *aspects* of late-modern institutions as they operate and evolve, “elements that explain their peculiarly dynamic character” (*Modernity* 16). He lists three: The separation of time and space, the disembedding of social institutions, and institutional reflexivity. For the sake of time and relevance, I will focus on the third of these. Reflexivity, as Giddens defines it, refers to “the susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge. Such information or knowledge is not incidental to modern institutions, but constitutive of them” (*Modernity* 20). Where pre-modern traditional societies were barred from reflexive reorganization on the basis of traditional prohibitions, and Enlightenment thinkers (drawing on the model of the natural sciences) saw their project as founding “[secure] knowledge of the social and natural worlds” (*Modernity* 16), late modern social institutions remain open to continual self-reflection and consequent reorganization. This constant process of reflection often undermines previous social “truths.” Writing in the late, 1990s, Giddens takes late modern Western attitudes to the institution of marriage as a representative case:

Up to even a generation ago, marriage was structured by established traditions....Marriage was formed to a large degree in terms of traditional expectations of gender, sexuality, and so forth. Now it is a much more open system with new forms of risk. Everyone who gets married is conscious of the fact that divorce rates are high, that women demand greater equality in the past. The very decision to get married is constitutively different from before. There has never been a high-divorce, high-remarriage society before. (Giddens and Pierson 105)

As the example of the reflexively fluctuating status of marriage highlights, life in a reflexively organized society has as one of its premises an essential institutional instability. So, given that these same (newly unstable) institutions form, direct, and scaffold the lives of the inhabitants of late modern societies, individual life itself takes on much of this same destabilizing introspective impulse. As Giddens puts it, “the reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self” (*Modernity* 32).

And it is in these cases that this dissertation’s interests lie. The examples that follow are less solipsistically reflexive individual monads than characters who find themselves trapped in the midst of seismic institutional shifts that forcibly reorder their senses of social reality. If this introduction has provided a set of theoretical considerations that might also apply to real-world cases, then the textual analyses contained in the chapters that follow provide something available almost exclusively to fiction: a phenomenologically rich record of the encounter between large-scale social change and individual minds, explored to an extent and depth not possible without the tools of narrative fiction (particularly free-indirect discourse and the vocal tools of Bakhtin and Wertsch).

V. Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1 begins with this dissertation’s most distinctive narrating voice: the first-person account of Jason Compson IV, the paternally (and critically) neglected youngest son of William Faulkner’s Compson family. Under the theoretical terms outlined above, Jason draws interest for his distinct social stance; he is less pure atavist than liminal figure. Jason mediates between two distinct institutional positions. On the one hand, he repeats almost obsessively the institutional tokens] of a pre-modern social order – the Mississippi plantation aristocracy, of which his family

were formerly members, and whose influence and norms (in a modern context) are rapidly waning.³ On the other, Jason saturates his thought and talk with the performative vocabulary of modern financialized capitalism, aiming to capture parts of the past via the tools of the present.

However, when these efforts fail, Faulkner moves from Jason-centric first-person perspective to an external voice, one whose free-indirect distance proves more capable of mediating between past and present. Following the details of an Easter Sunday sermon for Jefferson's black community (including among them for now the disabled Benjy Compson), Faulkner's narration by and large drags the novel back into the social space of the nineteenth century. The Compson family remains attached, inexorably, to the institutional tokens and norms of the pre-modern economic and social institutions that shaped the world of their forbears. If Faulkner here offers a glimpse of modernity's institutional shape, the overall rhetorical arc of the novel ends in silence, refusal, turning away from whatever that modernity might constitute.

Although it concerns the same time-period and also ends in silence, *Tender Is the Night* (the subject of Ch. 2) involves a vastly different economic and social story. Here, we encounter more sophisticated institutional structures at their points of transition; in this case, the social and economic transformation of the US in the wake of WWI. Overarchingly, Fitzgerald's novel concerns itself with changes in the nature and organization of capital, as these changes force a restructuring of that capitalist regime's epiphenomenal structure: the *haute bourgeoisie* social hierarchy that emerges from it. If the notion of a social hierarchy seems distant from the formalized powers Searle describes, witness the deontic force Fitzgerald ascribes to the members

³ Jason insists on himself as the aristocratic master of house, invoking what Giddens terms a traditional notion of authority where "masters are designated according to traditional rules and obeyed because of traditional status....Household officials and favorites are often tied to the ruler in a patrimonial way, as slaves or dependants" (Giddens, "Living" 82-3).

of a wealthy American family: “They were an American ducal family without a title – the very name written in a hotel register, signed to an introduction, used in a difficult situation, caused a psychological metamorphosis in people, and in return this change had crystallized her sense of position” (*TN* 158). Material changes (ownership) lead to social change (position) and thereby invest the illocutionary tokens used by members of this family (writing, utterance) with institutional force not unlike that granted to persons in official roles. *Tender Is the Night* tracks this series of changes via the power dynamics of the relationship between Dick and Nicole Diver.

Within the primary institutional narrative of *Tender*, Fitzgerald embeds a second institutional story. Dick and Nicole are husband and wife, but their marital relationship is also written over with the traces of their initial connection as psychiatrist and patient. This means that the novel’s primary institutional narrative of the capitalist dimension proceeds alongside (and often through) the story of another institutional shift in the surveillance function. As Foucault states, the role of psychoanalysis (as practiced by the Freud-trained Dick Diver) falls well within the scope of surveillance’s main function of “normalization”:

Psychoanalysis was established in opposition to a certain kind of psychiatry, the psychiatry of degeneracy, eugenics, and heredity....But the fact remains that in our societies the career of psychoanalysis has taken other directions and has been the object of different investments. Certain of its activities have effects which fall within the function of control and normalization (Foucault 60-1)

In this case, Dick’s initial role as Nicole’s analyst involves the “control and normalization” of her neurotic behavior; bringing it into line with the norms of her gender and class. However, as their relationship (and clinical “case”) progresses, this dynamic no longer

holds: Dick and Nicole begin to reflect upon and reorganize their own lives, with Nicole gradually assuming Dick's old role. And these personal changes echo the larger reflexive processes in the institutions that structure their lives (psychoanalysis and class). Although Fitzgerald includes obvious changes in the behavior of each character, the true depth and complexity of this multifarious process register only at the level of narrative voice, which splits, alters, and reorganizes itself to match the social and personal changes it follows. Rather than spell out the whole contents of the chapter, I will end this summary with an image that condenses the changes in plot and tonality that emerge near the novel's end, that of an apparently resurgent Nicole on the cusp of achieving a new independence: "Nicole had been designed for change, for flight, with money as fins and wings. The new state of things would be no more than if a racing chassis, concealed for years under the body of a family limousine, should be stripped to its original self" (*TN* 280). Faster and better equipped to a world of accelerating change, but also fragile, incomplete, uncovered. If Nicole is better suited than Dick to the social and institutional milieu of the late 1920s, then she also reflects its flaws.

Where the texts analyzed in Chapters 1 and 2 register institutional changes by covering large groups and distances – families, histories, different towns and cities – the events of Graham Greene's *The Human Factor* seem almost miniature. Greene's protagonist, Maurice Castle, works as an analyst within the United Kingdom's surveillance apparatus (MI6), and thus his view of institutional operations will necessarily have a contained and interior quality; but Greene adds to this the fascinating dimension of Castle's status as double-agent. Castle already inhabits the interior of a deeply reflexive and self-examining organization, and in order to achieve his operational goals (transmitting classified data) and maintain personal integrity, he turns even further into himself. Chapter 3 traces *The Human Factor's* movement of internalized tensions,

involving a cat-and-mouse chase between Castle and the intermental group that governs MI6. As the institution grows more reflexive (looking further into itself, readjusting its methods to match those of the KGB and CIA), Castle (and Greene's narrating voice) matches its procedures, ordering his life and thought around the principles and language of surveillance in order to avoid notice or capture. Greene also includes repeated moments of memory – dreams and secrets that Castle locks within himself. If *The Sound and the Fury* and *Tender Is the Night* follow voices who balk at and push against institutional changes, *The Human Factor* poses a different question, one that turns in an almost ethical direction: Given that the institutional forces that saturate and drive late modern life cannot be halted or fought, how might it be possible to salvage some interiority from *within* them?

In a sense, David Foster Wallace's posthumously published novel-fragment *The Pale King* (the topic of Chapter 4), contains multitudes. Where each of the previous chapters deals with a small set of characters or narrative techniques, *The Pale King* consumes all of them: dozens of narrating characters; first-person, externalized, and free-indirect voices; and a central institutional structure (the IRS) that involves all four of Giddens' institutional dimensions of modernity (capitalism, technology, information-control, and police power). Moreover, Wallace includes intense and nested reflexivity at levels both personal and institutional. Chapter 4 follows the novel's voices as they move from reflexive self-consciousness at purely personal levels, to characters who attempt to mediate between themselves and their institution, and finally to the institution itself, caught in the throes of its own reflexive movement (a redefinition of the IRS and its main operational methods). If the novel's narrative structure seems disconnected and hypertrophied, it stems from Wallace's attempt to craft a fictional representation of an institutional structure too large and socially diffuse to be captured in a single voice, and to

include voices capable of expressing concerns or articulating questions (political, ethical, metaphysical, existential, psychological) that the institution's actions prompt. And for Wallace, in answer to Greene's question, the examination of extreme institutional complexity and reflexivity engenders a return (newly informed, of course) to a lower level of collective organization.

VI. Closing Reflections and Open Questions

So, if we look back over the process outlined above, this dissertation might be said to trace a pattern of convergent evolution between modernity's institutional structures and the narrative voice that represents, interrogates, and responds to them. It begins with Faulkner's bifurcated voices, a narrative space that struggles to unify nascent languages with older modes of identity, thus keeping the two separate. As we move into the more modern landscape of *Tender Is the Night*, the narratives of psychology and class are matched by a more sophisticated narrative voice that internalizes the struggle between institutional forces; splitting, shifting, and realigning entirely within the space of a single narrating perspective. Later, in *The Human Factor*, when the institutions themselves grow more complex and reflexive in their structures and more extensive in their operational reach, we find a voice that matches this operation by retreating ever-further into the interior – working to open (and at times even create) new depths, new spaces for privacy and agency *within* the self. Finally, in Wallace we encounter an institutional space and narrating apparatus so large and nested that they turn back upon themselves entirely. And is this pattern of involution likely explains why Wallace – whose text includes essentially a *reductio ad absurdum* of Greene's case – turns in a different direction, back toward a combination of the ethical and political.

In another sense, this dissertation might be viewed as a narrative of the individual's struggle with impersonal institutional forces in a late modern setting, with an implicit argument for the value of narrative fiction in that milieu. The tools of a psychologically and socially informed narrative theory prove particularly useful here. By at once following individual minds and recognizing their frequent control by (or membership in) social minds, it highlights the ways in which literature, operating in a late modern landscape where the previous anchors of subjectivity and agency (religion, national identity, class status, religious belief) have been stripped away, stages the encounter between persons and systems in a phenomenologically rich manner. Though sociological descriptions or non-fiction narratives might provide a more veridical account, only fictional narrative remains capable of representing social minds in a way that both highlights their permeability to social and institutional forces *and* traces their internal reactions to those forces (I think here of the "Dicole" voice followed in Chapter 2; no other form of description would be able to represent such an entity without recourse to the tools of fictional narration). If there is a purpose the literary might serve here, it would seem to be acting as a leading edge for other disciplines, throwing light onto the presence of social and institutional relations not previously studied, and thus opening the way for other modes of questioning.

CHAPTER ONE

Jason Compson's Invisible Life: Finance, Illocution, and Self-Deception in *The Sound and the Fury*

The importance of language for the development of culture lies in the fact that, in language, man juxtaposed to the one world another world of his own, a place which he thought so sturdy that from it he could move the rest of the world from its foundations and make himself lord over it...The shaper of language was not so modest as to think that he was only giving things labels; rather, he imagined that he was expressing the highest knowledge of things with words...Very belatedly (only now) is it dawning on men that in their belief in language they have propagated a monstrous error.

-Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All too Human*

I. Desires Become Words

In the second chapter of *The Sound and the Fury*, while wandering south of Boston on June 2nd, 1910, Quentin Compson encounters three young boys fishing at a stream, who chatter excitedly about the prospect of catching a famed local trout:

Then they all talked at once, their voices insistent and contradictory and impatient, making of unreality a possibility, then a probability, then an incontrovertible fact, as people will when their desires become words. (Faulkner, *Sound* 75).

While the linguistic process Quentin ascribes to the children recalls obviously his own obsessive re-narration of his experiences with his sister Caddy⁴, the verbal patterns he notes have a closer textual parallel in the speech of another Compson brother: Jason. The words Faulkner employs to describe the boys' conversation each point to characteristics most associated with Jason: It is Jason who insists upon the authority of his views and station, Jason who relies on half-digested stereotypical "probabilities" in his reasoning, and Jason whose impatient and contradictory

⁴ Ross and Polk note this connection: "Quentin inadvertently describes his own attempt to eliminate Caddy's lovers from her past...by telling his father" (104). As does Kinney: "[the boys'] pattern is a paradigm for [Quentin's] own mental process" (146).

actions lead him to financial and personal ruin. Understanding the deeper thematic line indicated by this episode will require some wider context.

Quentin's description maps onto both his and his brother's narratives because the two Compson men grapple with a common problem, one best articulated by Allan Tate in his 1936 jeremiad against the industrializing South, "What Is A Traditional Society?." ⁵ Drawing on Eliot's "A Game of Chess," Tate argues that the modern West has rejected both the "higher myth" of religion and the "lower myth" of traditional social structures. ⁶ Further, because they have rejected their guiding myths, inhabitants of the modern South have lost the capacity for "human action": "it means that they are no longer capable of defining a human objective...that they capitulate from their human role to a series of pragmatic conquests which, taken alone, are true only in some other world than that inhabited by men" (384-5). The decline of these institutions deprives modern persons of a traditional background (a network of meanings) that would provide their actions with meaning and order, leaving only immediate gratification – physical or financial - in its place. ⁷

Whatever their distance from Eliot's London, both Jason and Quentin confront a version of the challenge Tate articulates: finding sources of order and significance for "human action" in an ideologically unstable modern world. Quentin's response is both overt and tragic: Unable to impose his nineteenth-century values upon other characters by entreaty or violence, he collapses within himself, escaping into Tate's "other world" of memory and fantasy, and eventually takes

⁶ "manners, religions, morals, codes" (Tate 384).

⁷ Here I employ John Searle's sense of institutions as social phenomena that create deontic powers (rights, duties, obligations, requirements) [Searle, *Making* 91]. For Searle, informal or normative social hierarchies fall within this category. Central to both brothers' narratives is the disappearance of a hierarchy that guaranteed such deontic relations.

his own life. Where the sensitive Quentin agonizes over the gap between his desires and the actions available to him,⁸ his brother denies it altogether. Jason makes words themselves into the primary medium for his actions, employing a range of different speech acts and performative objects to impose his will on both the world around him and the unsatisfactory aspects of himself. If Quentin's monologue records a gradual retreat from an encroaching cultural tide, Jason's represents a refusal of it. Jason attempts to shape his world through his implacable will and relentless assertion. Lacking the economic security and traditional social hierarchy that guaranteed the authority of his ancestors, Jason aspires to a kind of autochthony.⁹

In this essay, I draw on resources in the philosophy of language, mind, and action to unpack the formal connections linking the major domains of Jason's activity: financial, social, and psychological. Because Faulkner in this novel explores the relation between saying and doing, I have turned primarily to two philosophers who have pursued the same question in their domain: J.L. Austin and John Searle. Since speech act theory assumes that linguistic utterances and objects can carry social agency, applying it here allows us to delineate the multiple, reticulated levels of action on which Jason operates. Searle's granular taxonomy of illocutionary acts, in particular, proves well-suited to decoding the inner life of a man who takes such pains to veil his actions in words. My central claim will be that Jason can best be understood as a performer, in both verbal and social terms. Rather than passive verbal or psychological habits, Jason's patterns of speech and thought comprise deliberate strategies for action – active attempts to shape himself

⁸ “the difference between contemplation and action, telling and doing...” (Kartiganer 626)

⁹ Pippin defines a belief in autonomy as the central feature of the modernist ideal: a desire to “regulate and evaluate...beliefs by rational self-reflection,” to “rule” one's own thoughts and actions (12). Moreover, the modern version of autonomy is distinguished by a belief in the subject's “self-grounding” (autochthony): The positioning of individual will as the ultimate arbiter of value, the justification for all actions. Jason, through his incessant use of finance's rational vocabulary, and his technique of relentless illocutionary assertion, manifests a belief in both features.

and his circumstances. While Jason is often described as the simplest or “sanest” of the Compson brothers, attending to the subtly intentional qualities of his monologue can reveal additional layers of psychological and textual complexity, as well as clarify the connections between them.

Though he prides himself on his ability to “say” things directly, Jason’s speech acts tend toward the equivocal, the subtly coercive: Irony, evasion, and indirect speech. In his moments of genuine assertion, by contrast, Jason draws on voices that derive authority from repetition, reciting Southern stereotypes and nativist clichés. Jason’s use of assertion and indirect speech, along with his constant appeals to stereotypes, undergirds his accompanying social performance: To achieve his desired identity, Jason must balance between sets of social poles, modernizer and traditionalist, financial speculator and aristocrat, Bascomb and Compson; to the extent that Jason maintains such balance, he does so through speech acts. Understanding Jason’s monologue as an extended attempt to act through words permits a deeper and more synoptic account of his character than currently exists. Redefining the extended rant that comprises Jason’s section as a series of verbal and social actions has several advantages: It reveals the hidden affective dimension of his complex financial gambits, clarifies the reasoning behind his inconsistent actions and psychological fixations, and provides a clearer picture of his family relations. Although Jason is often read as reacting mechanically to external circumstances,¹⁰ I will argue that his narrative represents a deliberate, sophisticated attempt to achieve a vision of personal autonomy by imposing order on himself and his environment.

II. Jason and Performance

¹⁰ “Jason cannot grasp the larger cultural circumstances responsible for so much of his suffering, so he strikes out at whoever happens to be handy” (Matthews, *Sound* 63-4).

By April 1928, the time of Jason's narration, the Compson family has been in social and economic free fall for several generations. As Faulkner writes in the 1946 Appendix, the Compson family in the nineteenth century produces a governor, a Brigadier general, and the founder of Jefferson (206). If Jason's dipsomaniacal father achieves no such accolades, he is at least intelligent and, in his way, devoted to his children – he gives Quentin advice, treats Benjy with affection, and takes in Caddy's bastard daughter without question. By the time of Jason's narrative, the Compsons seem to have completed their devolution: Quentin has died, Benjy remains prisoner to his autism, Caddy has run off, and Miss Quentin has begun to repeat the pattern set by her mother. In addition, the family land holdings have dwindled to a house and servant cabin, the rest sold off to pay for Caddy's ill-fated wedding, Quentin's sole year at Harvard, and ensuing funeral expenses. Despite the family's reduced state by the time of Jason's narrative, though, he maintains an uneasy connection with the earlier Compsons: He fervently desires the prestige once commanded by his last name, yet needs to distance himself from the rest of his "doomed" family. Jason fulfills these contradictory desires by means of an uneasy verbal balancing act, the mechanics of which are central for understanding his thought-process.

Although Jason is, by this time, a mere clerk in a country hardware store, and therefore lacks the land holdings and social connections that established his forefathers as members of the Mississippi plantocracy, he takes care to emphasize the continuity between himself and the class of his ancestors. Lacking a material basis for his social status, Jason substitutes a verbal one through a doubled performance that has both social and linguistic valences. The philosopher J.L. Austin defines performative utterances as statements in which speakers "are *doing* something...rather than *reporting*" on a pre-existing set of facts (13). Examples of these would include apologies, curses, promises, and baptisms. Performative utterances aim to *create* facts –

making new realities, rather than describing those that already exist. Prior to unpacking the complex role of performatives in Jason's monologue, some further theoretical clarification is in order.

In his Harvard lectures, Austin makes an initial division between performative and constative (or propositional) utterances, which he then expands into initial categories of speech acts.¹¹ Austin's basic taxonomy, in turn, finds itself expanded in the work of his pupil, John Searle. Focusing on Austin's notion of the illocutionary act,¹² Searle's more encompassing project involves redefining *all* speech as a subset of human action (SA 17). To clarify the distinction between the two men's views: Whereas Austin limits the concept of the performative or illocutionary to a set of *verbs*, Searle expands it to include all spoken sentences – a set of *acts*. For Searle, "Making a statement is as much performing an illocutionary act as making a promise," and thus, "any utterance will consist in performing one or more illocutionary acts" (EM 18). On this account, my stating that the time is now 5:28 PM is as legitimate an action as throwing a football or declaring war on Moldova. However, merely uttering a sentence will not guarantee an action's success¹³; felicitous utterances must take place under conditions of sincerity, preparation, content, and linguistic competency. As a result, speech acts may (to borrow Austin's term) "misfire" in numerous ways, and Jason's chapters provide an object lesson in such infelicities.

¹¹ In his eighth lecture, Austin further delineates this division into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (*How*, 94-104). For present purposes, though, I have chosen to adhere to Searle's more fine-grained and systematic taxonomy of speech acts, particularly the illocutionary.

¹² The aforementioned performative, distinct from the utterance itself (locutionary) and the actions the illocution induces listeners to take (perlocutionary). Hereafter, I will follow Searle in employing 'performative' and 'illocutionary' interchangeably.

¹³ The utterance "I hereby declare war in the name of Transdnistria!" has no effective illocutionary force if uttered by me from my breakfast table in California; an entire network of beliefs, desires, and circumstances needs to be in place, first.

Austin's notion of the performative proves central for understanding Jason's thinking because such utterances underlie many of his speech patterns. The majority of Jason's actions take place within the verbal domain, and thus attending to the illocutionary details of these (often defective) speech acts provides a window into his psychology. The underlying performative informs Jason's voice as soon as he speaks:

Once a bitch always a bitch, what *I say*. *I says* you're lucky if her playing out of school is all that worries you. *I says* she ought to be down there in that kitchen right now, instead of up there in her room, gobbing paint on her face and waiting for six niggers that cant even stand up out of a chair unless they've got a pan full of bread and meat to balance them, to fix breakfast for her. (113) [my italics]

"Once a bitch always a bitch," would be a propositional statement (albeit a trivially true one), if taken at face value. Instead, Jason appends the attributive clause "I say," which marks his first sentence as an illocutionary attempt. Drawing on Searle's taxonomy, we can identify it as an assertive – a speech act that expresses a personal belief and thus involves "the interest of the speaker" as much as its propositional content (*EM* 12-13). Further, the profusion of such attributive clauses in this small section of prose, particularly given their close proximity to one another, indicates another aspect of Jason's attitude: Uncertain of his status as speaker, unsure that his listeners will take him seriously, Jason asserts himself constantly ("I say. I says").¹⁴ This verbal habit highlights another contextual feature of his chosen illocutionary act: As Amélie Rorty writes, an assertion of this kind serves as "an affirmation in response to a doubt..."(390). That these assertive locutions mark Jason's narration throughout the novel's third chapter

¹⁴ Serious worthy of note here is Lewis Layman's observation that Jason shares this verbal habit with another of modernism's verbal tyrants, the narrator of the "Cyclops" chapter in Joyce's *Ulysses*: "...the repetition of the word 'I' tenders the self-preoccupation of [both] narrators, who are unable to transcend their own egotism" (64).

intimates both a pervasive insecurity about his own speech and an accompanying desire to force his beliefs onto the world around him. Rorty identifies such incantatory illocutions as a common habit of self-deceivers: “there is some sense in which [the self-deceiver] hopes to make what he says come true by saying it often and in the right circumstances, to make it not only a description, but a way of transforming himself” (392). Jason resorts to incantation, as though repeating a few phrases might propel his social standing upward like Baron Münchhausen rising from the swamp. The self-transformational aspect of these statements is buttressed by another fact: For all their apparently public character, many of Jason’s posturing assertions take place internally.¹⁵ The performative character of Jason’s narrative, though, extends far beyond the inclusion of a few nervous attributive clauses.

In addition to the aforementioned attributives, Jason’s opening monologue contains another illocutionary strategy: It encodes a number of implicit references intended to suggest his elevated social position. According to Thadious Davis, the traditional “job of the head of a Southern aristocratic family was to provide food,” for both family and servants. As a result, “the bounty of his table was indicative of his economic and social status” (140). Providing such sustenance would have been a particularly difficult task during the 1920s, when the boll weevil infestation “swept through the South unchecked,” devastating American cotton production (Giesen xi). In light of these facts, Jason’s humorous barb toward his servants, “six niggers who cant even stand up out of a chair unless they’ve got a pan full of bread and meat to balance them,” takes on an added valence of pride; Jason may be complaining, but in doing so he also implicitly asserts his socioeconomic status. Significantly, boasts and complaints comprise a subset of Searle’s assertive class of illocutionary acts, one distinguished by its close connection

¹⁵ As Matthews writes, Jason’s monologue is “no public performance” (*The Play...*, 103).

to the speaker's interests and identity (EM 13). Whatever irritation Jason feels because of his servants, they serve an important symbolic role for the would-be plantocrat: allowing him to complain "like a hard-pressed plantation owner" (Matthews, *Sound* 103). Jason's gripes, then, constitute an illocutionary method for aligning himself with the plantocracy: By adopting the grievances of "plantation owners," Jason aligns his "interests" with theirs. However, Jason's repeated employment of this strategy forces it into infelicity. As with the profusion of attributive clauses in his first sentences, Jason's continual complaints about his "kitchen full of niggers" (116,117, 119,144), suggest more anxiety than pride – performative utterances being a poor substitute for external facts.

Nonetheless, the tacit social boast contained in Jason's complaints about his "niggers" proves indicative of a larger pattern in his behavior, one that supervenes heavily on a prior network of social meanings. Jason's entire being – his actions, his way of thinking, his relation to the residents of Jefferson – can be understood as an extended and flawed performance of gender and class assumptions. Whereas the previous heads of the Compson family had land holdings, education, and an entire network of widely-held patriarchal attitudes to ensure their socio-economic and gender identities, Jason can only attempt to establish this gender-role through what Butler terms, "a stylized repetition of acts" for an audience consisting of the people of Jefferson (519). Lacking material signifiers of the socio-economic identity he so desires, Jason assays to replace them with a pattern of verbal insistence. As a result, all of the distinguishing linguistic features of Jason's monologue – his attributives, his assertions, his interactions, refusals, and even his financial activities – are characteristic of the person he *wants* to be; the 'he' whom he would project onto the world. As Ross states, "For all his egotism [Jason] does not respect himself; he respects only what he believes he could become" ("Jason"

243). Significantly, the identity to which he aspires exists in a conscious tension with the brute facts of Jason's life, a tension which drives him to irrational action and psychological inconsistency. However, before examining the problems of Jason's performed self, I should first adumbrate some of its main features.

As indicated by his complaints and use of the attributive "I say," Jason's illocutionary strategies all serve to assert the importance of the Compson family (and himself) within the social structure of Jefferson. Jason's concern for public opinion emerges with particular force when he first threatens Miss Quentin: "Everybody in this town knows what you are. But I won't have it anymore, you hear? I don't care what you do, myself,' I says. 'But I've got a position in this town and I'm not going to have any member of my family going on like a nigger wench. You hear me?'" (119). Anxious about the declining reputation of the Compson family, Jason attempts to counteract the familial slide via a complex set of speech acts: he insists upon his social standing in the town because he can adduce no evidence for it beyond his own assertions. Further, he asserts his dominance over his niece by aligning her with another marginal group, black women, and implying threat of physical violence, "If I hear one more time that you haven't been to school, you'll wish you were in hell" (119). Here, Faulkner introduces another of Jason's favored linguistic tools – indirect speech acts. On Searle's definition, in indirect speech acts, "illocutionary force indicators for one kind of illocutionary act can be uttered to perform, *in addition*, another type of illocutionary act" (*EM* 30).¹⁶ In this case, the act of warning "If I hear...you'll wish you were in hell," carries the additional illocutionary force of a threat

¹⁶ Indirect speech serves as the primary medium for Jason's interactions with Miss Quentin, a pattern I explore further in Section III.

(presumably of physical violence). As with his assertions and boasts, Jason's indirect threats here attest to his desire to make words *do*.

Openly defied by the socially inferior inhabitants of his own house (Miss Quentin, Dilsey), Jason struggles to maintain his authority through assertion and intimidation. Similarly, with the other residents of Jefferson, Jason strains to maintain a verbal connection to the family past: "I says my people owned slaves here when you were all running little shirt tail country stores and farming land no nigger would look at on shares" (149). Here, again, Jason insists upon his social status by appealing to values of an older order (slave ownership). However, in a Jefferson dominated by the likes of the Snopes family, such appeals have a fading currency, at best.

Conscious of Jefferson's evolving social values, Jason responds by playing the part of the businessman, interlacing his speech and thought with commerce's illocutionary vocabulary of declarations, contracts, and promises.¹⁷ Desperate to define himself as a capitalist, Jason attempts to do so by "maniacally interpreting and evaluating every event in terms of its monetary significance" (Matthews, *Play* 102). When driving Miss Quentin to school, for example, he recalls instantly the exact cost of her textbooks from the previous autumn (118). Later, he chastises a customer for buying a low-priced hame strap instead of a more expensive alternative; the customer's explanation that the remaining "fifteen cents will buy...a snack of dinner," has no purchase on Jason, who sees all value as reducible to economic utility (123). Jason's monetary calculus extends further, to his family relations: When he encounters the exiled Caddy at their father's funeral, Jason assumes she has returned for the only reason he *can* conceive – to claim

¹⁷ The 1920s saw the emergence of a new group of Southern bourgeois, the Progressives, who identified themselves more by business and material gains than family history (Railey 62).

her inheritance: "...you needn't have come back. There's not anything left'" (127). Shortly thereafter, he frames her request to see her estranged daughter in investment terms, protesting that he "run[s] more risk" than his sister because she has "nothing at stake" (131). This moment of negotiation is particularly revealing for Jason's perspective: Jason stands to lose no money in showing his niece to her mother – instead, the "risk" to which he refers involves an implicit equation of social value with monetary price. The thousand dollars that Caddy promises him are weighed against the social cost of having his mother or the citizens of Jefferson discover her presence – events which would incur no capital loss but would further damage the Compson family's social standing in the town. This unspoken equation of social position with monetary value will surface later, in connection with Jason's financial machinations, through which he attempts to restore both his family's lost wealth and their erstwhile social position.

Jason's use of financial jargon provides him with a frame for coping with the world, and his use of the insistent "I say" a method for asserting himself into it; building on these tactics, his most ambitious illocutionary strategy - the constant deployment of stereotypes - combines both functions. Jason utilizes stereotypes to guide his thinking, and asserts those stereotypes continually as a means of forcing them onto the surrounding social world. While his deployment of racist and sexist clichés appears to be mere recitation, Jason delivers them in the tone calculated to lend authority to his other assertions: "*Like I say* the only place for them is in the field, where they'd have to work from sunup to sundown. They cant stand prosperity or an easy job" [my italics] (156).¹⁸ Such stereotypes are a mode of knowledge well-suited to Jason.

¹⁸ In the syntax and authoritative tone of these pronouncements, Jason echoes his father's gnomic nihilism, e.g. "...victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools" (48).

According to Bhabha, “stereotype...is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place,’ already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated...as if the...bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof can never, in discourse, be proved” (18). The central ambivalence of stereotypes, between the “fixed” character of their underlying knowledge-claim and the equally powerful anxiety that this “knowledge” might lose its authority, produces a characteristic discursive pattern: continual repetition that produces a sense of “probabilistic truth” (18). That Jason draws upon this probability is indicated by the sheer number and variety of groups he targets with stereotypes on April 6.¹⁹ Lacking any historical or empirical evidence to justify these clichéd judgments that saturate his speech and thought, Jason instead turns, as elsewhere, to repetition.

For all their apparent vapidness, Jason’s constant appeals to stereotypic “knowledge” in fact constitute an attempt to circumvent the strictures of illocutionary logic. Based on their surface features, Jason’s stereotype-utterances fall within the assertive class of speech acts and have what Searle calls a word-to-world direction of fit, meaning they “are supposed...to match an independently existing world” (*Intentionality* 7). However, Jason’s method of continual incantation, along with the appeal to the “probabilistic truth” that Bhabha identifies, serves to reverse the illocutionary force of his utterances. By drawing on the “force of ambivalence” underlying stereotypes, Jason shifts his assertives’ direction of fit so that the world appears to “[match] the propositional content of the speech act” (*Intentionality* 7). While nothing Jason does guarantees the felicity of these reversed assertives,²⁰ his deployment of this illocutionary strategy attempts to provide the external world with the static quality of his basic concept system: Jason

¹⁹ Here is an incomplete list: blacks, women, Jews, bankers, Northerners, farmers, small businessmen, college professors, college students, clergy, golfers, the mentally ill, Ford cars, and the New York Yankees.

²⁰ It seems doubtful that Jason’s assertives would carry much force except when heard by those who share his background assumptions and beliefs, what Searle calls the “Network” (*Intentionality* 141).

tries to “fix” the world in place through speech acts (Bhabha 18). Like the boys that Quentin encounters in 1910, Jason would make “a probability” into an “incontrovertible fact” (75). Such fixation would thus maintain the institutional structure that Jason prizes: The social and racial hierarchies of the pre-industrial South. Rather than lower-class “paranoia,” Jason’s assertive repetition of stereotypes constitutes a strategy for maintaining the institutional world around him.

The aggressive quality of the speech-patterns outlined so far, Jason’s assertives and stereotypes, also links him back to his older brother. Earlier in the novel, after the revelation of Caddy’s pregnancy, Quentin conjures an incest fable to cover it up: “*and Ill tell you how it was Ill tell father then itll have to be...Ill make you say we did Im stronger than you Ill make you know we did you thought it was them but it was me listen I fooled you all the time*” (94). Here, Quentin’s address progresses from entreaty (“*and Ill tell you*”) to threat (“*Im stronger*”) to writing-over (“*you thought it was them but it was me*”); Quentin acts as if mere utterance would alter the past, could over-write Caddy’s memory. Quentin’s private illocutionary revisions of Caddy’s pregnancy thus mirror Jason’s public attempts to revise the social world through his speech acts; both men “need to alter an unbearable reality through language” (Kartiganer, *The Fragile Thread* 13).

As it does for his older brother, Jason’s strategy of verbal assertion has deeper implications for his relationships and inner life. Stereotypes allow a claim to *knowledge* of others (in Jason’s case, practically every person he encounters), but it forecloses other, more human, avenues of connection. Cavell is useful here: “A ‘failure to know’ might just mean an absence of something, a blank. A ‘failure to acknowledge’ is the presence of something, a confusion, an indifference, a callousness...Spiritual emptiness” (264). Jason’s mode of coping with the world (his arsenal of illocutionary acts) permits any number of knowledge or status assertions, but it

precludes empathetic connection. Jason's insistence on viewing everyone around him as flattened, subhuman caricatures has the added effect of making him the only acknowledged *person* in his world. Tracing out the implications of his illocutionary patterns reveals Jason to be a solipsist, as trapped by his conceptual armature as Quentin is by his depression or Benjy by his autism.²¹

To recapitulate: Reviewing Jason's monologue reveals a social performance of identity predicated on a set of illocutionary patterns. Desperate to maintain his family's plutocratic status but lacking material means to do so, Jason turns to verbal tools. To control those he would keep socially inferior, he uses threats and insinuation; to counterbalance his family's economic decline, he adopts the vocabulary of commerce; to combat the encroachment of the modern economy, he avers stereotypes of an older age; and, most centrally, he asserts his own importance incessantly. Taken together, these illocutionary strategies (along with his adopted tone) allow Jason to act entirely through his words, maintaining his desired identity through a "stylized repetition of [speech] acts" (Butler 519). Having adumbrated the main features of Jason's monologue and desired persona, we can now examine how the other aspects of Jason's life and language destabilize that persona.

III. Irony, Instability, Innuendo

Jason works hard to project an image of himself as the hyper-masculine scion of a declining aristocratic house who, via personal wisdom and a brilliant financial strategy, will restore the rightful fortunes of the Compson clan: "if the family fortune has bled away through neglect," Jason plans to "...win it all back" (Matthews, *Sound* 72). However, both Jason's

²¹ Even his family is reduced to mere cliché – Benjy becomes "the great American Gelding" (165), Miss Quentin a "slut," and his mother merely a "woman"

actions and the social realities of Jefferson work to undercut this performed identity and its underlying verbal strategies. In fact, much of the novel's humor derives from watching Jason struggle to maintain his performed perspective in the face of mounting evidence of its inauthenticity and internal contradictions. In his struggle, Jason resembles Richard Rorty's ironist, who realizes that the conceptual vocabulary she uses to understand the world is merely provisional (*Contingency* 73). However, unlike Richard Rorty's more reflective ironist, Jason fails to acknowledge such limitations to his viewpoint, even when he encounters them head-on; instead, he intensifies his illocutionary assault, reasserting his views with greater force. It is his stubborn refusal to cope with the failures of his concept-system that proves to be Jason's undoing.²²

The most prominent of these psychological inconsistencies arises from the complex illocutionary strategy Jason employs to cope with his family. While he takes great pride in being the patriarch of the aristocratic Compson house, that family's legacy and Jason's relation to it, are deeply problematic. Benjy and Quentin's sections establish the younger Jason as the family outsider – a petulant middle child and tattle-tale who is “denied” the “warmth of family affection” that exists between the other Compson siblings and their father (Wagner 258). As his father favored the other siblings over him, the adult Jason hedges his pride in upholding the Compson name with a series of indirect speech acts, verbal barbs directed at the other Compson males:

Well, Jason likes work. I says no I never had university advantages because at Harvard they teach you how to go for a swim at night without knowing how to swim and at

²² Stephen Ross writes that Jason is partly modeled on the Southern comic character Sut Luvigood but conspicuously lacks “Sut's most redeeming trait – the ability to laugh at himself” (“Jason” 245).

Sewanee they dont even teach you what water is. I says you might send me to the state University; maybe I'll learn how to stop my clock with a nose spray and then you can send Ben to the Navy I says or the cavalry, anyway, they use geldings in the cavalry.
(123)

Here, Jason makes sarcastic references to his own earning power, Quentin's suicide, his father's alcoholism, and Benjy's castration, along with an implicit dig at the value of public university education ("stop my clock with a nose spray"). These references represent another instance of Jason's indirect illocutionary acts, this time with a dual purpose: First, Jason's allusions communicate propositional content concerning each of the men mentioned. Second, and more importantly, this moment shows Jason "implicating a meaning" (Pinker, Novak, and Lee 835), negotiating his position among Compson men: Unable to demonstrate his superiority to them in any other way, Jason does so through implication.²³ Although such remarks might look like ordinary bitterness, for a character who defines himself through verbal performances, they carry a special weight. Jason's doubled verbal strategy to assert (via his brothers and father while still preserving the Compson family "face" (Pinker, Novak, and Lee 833) and insisting on his own quality as a laborer ("Jason likes work").

However, as Jason is loath to admit to himself, this "work" as a lowly clerk in a country store distances him further from the Compson "governors and generals" (48) he admires and aligns him instead with the other branch of his lineage, a family whose members share a penchant for verbal and social performance. Socially inferior to the plantocrat Compsons, the lower-class Bascombs are represented by Caroline Compson and her dissolute brother, Maury.

²³ Jason's hostile indirect speech here mirrors the implied hostility of his interactions with Miss Quentin

Caroline, more attached to Jason than to her other children, takes pains to identify him with the maternal line through her own repeated illocutionary assertives, ““Because you are a Bascomb, despite your name”” (115). Later, Jason tricks her into burning his forged version of Caddy’s check by playing on such family pride, prompting her to declare that ““We Bascombs need nobody’s charity”” (138). Here and elsewhere, Caroline iterates an illocutionary pattern established by her son, *insisting* on the truth of her assertives, as if her speech acts themselves could re-shape biological and social realities.

Beyond these patterns of counter-factual assertion, Caroline and Jason also share an attachment to the social performances that their assertives sustain. On April 8, Mrs. Compson refuses to cash Caddy’s monthly check for Miss Quentin, effectively keeping her granddaughter (and her family) in poverty; she does so while insisting, with a theatrical flourish, that she “[has] no pride”(137) and does so for the good of Miss Quentin(138). Caroline’s attachment to ritualistic social performances recalls Butler’s definition of gender identity as a “stylized repetition of acts”: Anxious to maintain her (increasingly tenuous) status as plantocrat matriarch, Caroline supplements her illocutionary acts with exaggerated social gestures. For example, when she catches a 15 year-old Caddy kissing a boy, Caroline enacts an exaggerated mourning ritual, donning a black veil and refusing to speak for a day (144). To extend the logic of Linda Wagner-Martin’s assessment, “Mrs. Compson make no pretense at being a mother, or even a woman: she is a lady” (267) in much the same sense that her son is a gentleman. Both characters enact social identities through a combination of illocutionary acts and social gestures, clinging to fading class-identities in the face of rapidly altering social realities.

If Jason’s associations with his mother and Bascomb uncle merely suggest the unrecognized contradictions at the center of his social performance, then his relationships with

the other two women in his family – Caddy and Miss Quentin – reveal those inconsistencies unequivocally. Jason begins April 6, 1928 by moralizing and physically threatening niece for skipping school: “‘Now,’ I says, ‘I want to know what you mean, playing out of school and telling your grandmother lies and forging her name on your report and worrying her sick. What do you mean by it?’” (116). However, truancy aside, the crimes Jason accuses Miss Quentin of here, forging Caroline’s name and lying to her, are precisely those he will commit that afternoon when embezzling another of Caddy’s checks. To Jason’s mind, his insincere speech acts derive their moral legitimacy from an earlier infelicity – Caddy and Herbert Head’s broken promise.

An instance of Jason’s monthly embezzlement forms another of April 6, 1928’s central actions, and it reveals the etiology of his relations to women, money, and illocutionary preferences.²⁴ Each month, when Caddy sends support checks for Miss Quentin, Jason forges copies of them for Caroline to ritualistically burn (141-2). To Jason, his cycle of forgery and theft constitutes not crime, but recompense for a violated informal contract from Caddy and Herbert Head; his niece and the checks “merely [symbolize] the job in the bank of which he had been deprived before he even got it” (190). Miss Quentin here recalls two illocutionary acts that have determined the course of Jason’s adult life: Caddy’s broken promise of marital fidelity to Herbert Head, and Head’s corresponding guarantee of employment for Jason, both of which fall into Searle’s “commissive” category of illocutionary acts.

The simultaneous failure of these informal commissives (broken promises) marks a turning point in Jason’s thinking about language, knowledge, and action – in Austin’s words “the occurrence of a piece of human testimony radically alters [his] situation” (“Other Minds” 154). Given the importance that illocutionary acts hold for Jason (they comprise the primary medium

²⁴ For Jason, these three categories are never wholly separate

for his own actions), these defective commissives carry a greater emotional significance than broken promises ordinarily should: For him, they amount to betrayal. Having been “deprived” because he trusted others’ intentions and avowals of sincerity, the only language Jason chooses to trust now is that of externalized, financial commitment – written contracts and money. Crucially, US currency at this point in history (prior to the revocation of the gold standard), consisted of what Searle terms “contract money,” with each bill representing the government’s *promise* to pay the bearer of such notes upon demand (Searle, *Mind* 126).²⁵ The symbolic valences of the stolen funds, thus, extend far beyond what Faulkner states openly.

To recall my earlier points, finance forms the lodestone of Jason’s performed self – he adopts the air of a businessman and frames everything in finance’s vocabulary of price, risk, loss, and gain. As Matthews writes, Jason’s focus on finance “seeks...to establish an order for his life that differs from the disorder Caddy causes in Quentin’s” (*The Play* 92). And on the surface, this focus appears to work: When upset after seeing Caddy at Quentin’s funeral, Jason turns to his hoarded currency for solace: “...so I counted the money again that night and put it away, and I didn’t feel so bad” (129).²⁶ However, Jason’s focus on money as a way of avoiding Caddy’s destructive sexuality actually draws him back into it. Jason knows the source of the funds he takes from his sister: When she offers him a thousand dollars for Miss Quentin, he taunts her: “I know how you’ll get [the money],’ I says. ‘You’ll get it the same way you got her’”(131). Here, Jason commits another of his indirect illocutions, allowing the implied acknowledgement of Caddy’s sexual activities to hang, unspoken, between his two assertives. Significantly, such an

²⁵ The connection between banknotes and gold is particularly obvious for Jason: When demanding money from Caddy at their Father’s funeral, he notices that she clutches “two or three yellow ones” – gold certificates (128).

²⁶ This association between counting money and relief likely has its roots in Jason’s upbringing. Earlier in the novel, Mr. Compson advises Quentin that “counting pennies has healed more scars than Jesus” (113).

implication only functions on the basis of “mutually shared background information” between Caddy and Jason; in this case, their tacit, mutual recognition of her sexual activity (Searle, *EM* 32). Jason prefers to view the bills he counts as purely symbolic, representing the promise of treasury gold or imagined achievements from his lost banking career, but the unvoiced speech act at the center of this transactional scene says otherwise: Jason’s notes remain stained by Caddy’s prostitution.

The realization that Jason’s hoarded cash is the product of Caddy’s marketed body exposes further instabilities in the self-image that he so prizes. Jason prides himself on his physical and financial power over women, relations he sees emblemized in his interactions with his prostitute, Lorraine: “I never promise a woman anything nor let her know what I’m going to give her. That’s the only way to manage them. Always keep them guessing. If you can’t think of any other way to surprise them, give them a bust in the jaw” (122). However, the revelation that Jason has systematically defrauded his niece of her remittances means that the majority of funds accrued in the Compson household over the previous fifteen years, and likely all of the money underwriting his sexual and financial excursions, has come from Caddy. Jason’s assertions of virility and absurd claims to “stand” on his “own feet,” thus represent more of his counter-factual illocutionary arsenal. In this case, the exaggerated masculinity of his assertive illocutions matches his desperation to disavow the reality of his personal finances. It comes as little surprise, then, that Jason burns all of Caddy’s notes: “I make it a rule never to keep a scrap of paper bearing a woman’s hand,”²⁷ as though burning might erase the notes’ connection to her

²⁷ Touch remains the primary trace of influence and responsibility: When meeting Caddy years earlier, Jason “could feel” the touch of her gaze and warns Dilsey that Caddy carries leprosy, a disease thought to be transmitted by tactile means (130).

body (122). However, despite Jason's efforts to burn them away, the haptic traces of his sister's money and sexuality resurface in the Compson household in even more solid form.

Where Jason's hoarding of the money remitted home by his sister provides him with an unspoken connection to Caddy's sexuality, his relationship with his niece renders this link public. Most important for present purposes, Jason's incestuous desire for his niece is established not only by acts of physical violence, but also by the speech acts he employs to address and conceptualize her. From the first pages of Jason's monologue, his descriptions of his niece are laden with bodily, sexual images: When scolding her for missing school, Jason shakes Miss Quentin such that her "kimono [comes] unfastened, flapping about..." leaving her "dam near naked" (116). Further, when Miss Quentin resists, Jason responds by threatening to remove his belt and "show" her "who's got hold of [her] now"(116). Here, Jason commits two indirect speech acts: his promise to disrobe carries both a threat of violence and an implied offer of sexual self-exposure - innuendo. As with other indirect speech acts, innuendo relies on what Searle calls "shared background information," though innuendo requires a specific kind of "information." As Angela Failler writes, "for sexual innuendo to [be felicitous]," it must "resonate for the [hearer] with prior acts or signifiers of sexual desire" (58). For Miss Quentin to uncover Jason's indirect speech act, she must perform same the action her mother did in the cemetery twelve years earlier: Recognizing the illocutionary indicators in, and sexual intent underlying, Jason's words.

And, like her mother, she does. Jason's innuendos – sexual suggestions toward his niece – constitute some of the only felicitous illocutionary acts he commits on April 6. When we first meet Jason, he scolds Miss Quentin for "playing out of school" with other men (116). As indicated by the empty condom tin Benjy sees in his section (32), Miss Quentin is very much

repeating a pattern set by her mother. Further, Miss Quentin, experienced with both her own sexual excursions and the incestuous suggestions of her uncle, picks up on the implied illocutionary force of Jason's indirect speech acts.²⁸ She even shares his sense of money's bodily character, at one point insisting that "[t]here's not a cent of your money on me. I'd starve first," as though a monetary debt to her uncle might amount to the touch of his "hand" on her body (118). Unable to retaliate with verbal gestures of her own, Miss Quentin takes the only available course of action – threatening to tear her dress in public and expose the innuendo's unspoken propositional content, the sexual aggression that Jason has veiled in indirect illocution. Given how much public acceptance of his performed persona matters to him, it is unsurprising that this action renders Jason "kind of [blind]" with rage (118).

Jason may refuse to recognize the sexual attraction he feels to Miss Quentin, but Faulkner takes pains to establish textual links between Jason's niece, her embezzled funds, and the sexual charge that both carry for Jason. When, after dinner on April 6, 1928, Jason locks Miss Quentin in her room, ostensibly so the girl can study, infelicitous innuendo results:

'How do you know she's studying?' I says.

'I don't know what else she'd do in there alone,' she says. 'She never did read any.'

'No, I says.' 'You wouldn't know. And you can thank your lucky stars for that,' I says.

Only what would be the use in saying it aloud. It would just have her crying on me again.

(164)

²⁸ Compare this to a similar exchange Jason has with the less-savvy Mrs. Compson a few moments earlier: "'Yes,' I says. 'If she stayed on the streets. I don't reckon she'd be playing out of school just to do something she could do in public,' I says.

'What do you mean?' she says.

'I don't mean anything,' I says. 'I just answered your question.' Then she began to cry again..." (114).

Jason implies that his niece engages in a solitary, illicit act of masturbation, and his tone connotes disapproval. Nevertheless, several lines later, Jason goes up to Miss Quentin's door voyeuristically to observe his niece in the act: "I could see the empty keyhole, but I couldn't hear a sound. She studied quiet. Maybe she learned that in school" (164). "Studied," given the network of innuendo and sexual meanings with which Jason surrounds his niece, has to be understood euphemistically. Jason cannot bring himself to admit a sexual desire for his niece, but he can allude to it in his narration. Moreover, having failed to spy, Jason returns to his room to perform his own act of illicit self-pleasure: "I got the box out and counted [the bills] again" (164) – counting Miss Quentin's stolen money, with its obvious erotic provenance, stands in for Jason's unconsummated attempt at voyeurism. Faulkner strengthens this sexual connection with a paratactic textual link between Jason's dirtied banknotes and his niece's body in the doubled "locks" that contain them: At the close of his day, Jason locks both of his assets away using keys from the same ring.

Just as Jason disavows his physical attraction to (and financial reliance upon) his niece, so too does he refuse to admit to his role in shaping her behaviors he so resents. Although Jason derides Quentin as a "bitch" and condemns her for "playing out of school," he fails to acknowledge the extent to which his torturous treatment of his niece has produced precisely the behavior he detests. Miss Quentin makes this point particularly obvious at the end of the chapter, saying to her uncle, "'Whatever I do, it's your fault...If I'm bad, it's because I had to be. You made me'"(162). Bereft of her mother's remittances (recognizably stolen by her uncle), and trapped in a miserable, abusive home situation, Quentin turns to the only resource she has left – trading on her value as the "sexual commodity" that her uncle already understands her to be (Feldstein 93). Moreover, since Jason's finances depend on the checks he purloins from his

niece, and given the centrality of finance to Jason's self-definition, the prospect of Quentin's departure constitutes a massive threat to both his economic and social identities.²⁹ That Jason does not view his niece in this (potentially threatening) way attests both to his capacity for self-delusion and to the faith he puts in the most significant (and deleterious) of his illocutionary activities – his financial speculations.

IV. Jason and the Cotton Exchange

Jason's activities at the telegraph office and, by extension, on the New York Cotton Exchange, form the locus of all his various performances on April 6 – tying together all the doublings, ironies, and contradictions that have driven his speech and actions so far. Up until Jason's entry into the domain of finance, his social performance has been both infelicitous and relatively ineffectual. Whatever Jason's pretensions to masculinity, business acumen, or ancestral gentility, Miss Quentin (118), Caddy (120) and Old Job (156) all penetrate the theatrical veneer of his persona with little difficulty. To escape the scrutiny and resistance of these figures, Jason turns to a domain in which, according to Italian economist Christian Marazzi, "facts are created by speaking them" – Finance (33). Unlike the skeptical social milieu of Jefferson, the world of finance offers Jason a semantic domain in which his illocutionary acts are accepted at face value. Freed from the resisting figures who hinder his plans in Jefferson (Miss Quentin, Earle, his mother), Jason finds in the anonymity of the cotton exchange ample space in which to act upon the values and identity he has proclaimed throughout the chapter, putting his performative persona to work in the only domain he respects. The results, unsurprisingly, are disastrous.

²⁹ This point deserves emphasis: Miss Quentin serves as focal point of nearly all Jason's illocutionary acts – financial, assertive, and indirect – on April 6.

The xenophobia, inconsistency, and self-deception that have undercut Jason's persona throughout the rest of the novel surface with particular vehemence in the discussion of his financial strategy. Prior to heading to the Jefferson telegraph office, Jason expounds on the nature of the cotton market:

"There's nothing to it," I says. "Cotton is a speculator's crop. They fill the farmer full of hot air and get him to raise a big crop for them to whipsaw on the market, to trim the suckers with. Do you think the farmer gets anything out of it except a red neck and a hump in his back? You think the man that sweats to put it into the ground gets a red cent more than a bare living...And what for? So a bunch of dam eastern jews I'm not talking about men of the jewish religion...I have nothing against jews as an individual," I says. "It's just the race" (120).

Although Jason later insists that in invoking "jews," he refers to New York financiers, his digression from finance to race is instructive. Jews, in 1920s Europe and America, were viewed as separate from the "genuine" citizens of modern nations such as France or Germany. Postone writes that, for nationalists in this time "the nation was not only a political entity; it was also concrete, determined by a common language, history, traditions, and religion" (94). Jews, by contrast, "were of the nation abstractly" (94). By denouncing New York financiers as "jews" and "foreigners," Jason aligns himself with both the "American" farmer and the concrete quality of that farmer's labor (tied to the aforementioned "land,") as opposed to the abstract nature of New York finance. Walter Ben Michaels has noted the nativist overtones of the focus on "blood," (224) and thus Jason's anxiety over the abstract nature of finance seems to cohere with his established persona and illocutionary strategies. His internal consistency, however, proves to be short-lived.

Immediately after having denounced New York financiers and “jews,” Jason reveals his own approach to investment: “It’s a sucker game, unless a man gets inside information from somebody that knows what’s going on. I happen to be associated with some people who’re right there on the ground. They have one of the biggest manipulators in New York for an adviser” (121). Most remarkable about this revelation is the self-contradictory abandon with which Jason delivers it; mere moments after waxing sympathetic over the plight of the American cotton farmer, Jason “whipsaws” in the opposite direction, priding himself on having “insider information” unavailable to the benighted residents of Jefferson. In effect, Jason totally reverses his position, in a manner that tacitly aligns him with those he despises as depriving “American” farmers of hard-earned profits. That Jason seems unaffected by the incoherence of his reversal points to a deeper pattern in his thinking and illocutionary tactics: Self-deception. As Amélie Rorty writes, a self-deceiver can maintain two contradictory positions because he “mistakenly believes that there is some strategy that enables him to reconcile his believing and not believing [a proposition]” (394). In order to explicate Jason’s version of this “strategy,” and how it involves Wall Street’s abstract operations, we must turn to Jason’s financial ledger.

As Wayne Westbrook has established, Jason sells short one contract (fifty thousand pounds) of cotton, likely using a margin account (55). Futures are contracts that traders purchase at the present time, hoping that the price of a given commodity (such as cotton) will rise in the future; these contracts serve an important role for farmers, enabling them to set prices well in advance, thereby offsetting the risk of a drop in the cotton price. These risk-offsets, in turn, prevent markets from falling into “cycle[s] of boom and bust” common prior to the advent of futures (Markham 3). The shorted futures contract is a sophisticated financial instrument that allows Jason to take a speculative position *against* the cotton farmers he serves in the store,

betting on a drop in price on a set date in the future. Viewed in the 1920s as a “parasitic” practice (Ott 18), short selling allows Jason to transform investable cash into larger amounts of money without the intermediary of physical asset ownership. As Godden writes, successful short-sellers “[trade] in an asset that is no more than a locus of price variation; or, of money made through volatility from borrowed money”(10) – a fact magnified by Jason’s employment of a margin account, an account which uses borrowed money to borrow further money. Additionally, identifying Jason’s financial position as a shorted cotton contract reveals new layers of ignorance and self-deception in his thinking about finance. Given the sizeable scale of even a single cotton contract (the lowest price Jason’s contract reaches on April 6 would be around \$6300 in 1928 dollars), Jason’s claim that he “never risk[s] much at a time” looks particularly absurd: Though Jason may declaim that he “just [wants] an even chance to get [his] money back,” the scale of the bets on his balance sheet betray larger ambitions (165).

The larger significance of Jason’s paper-to-paper transaction is twofold. First, by cycling his hoarded funds from Caddy into the futures market, en route to hopefully enlarged profits, Jason engages in a form of metaphorical money laundering. His aim, to wipe away the sordid history of his banknotes, would replace the traces of Caddy’s sexuality with the stamp of his own sophisticated financial ability. His financial actions recapitulate his burning of Caddy’s letters to Miss Quentin: in each instance, Jason tries to erase the woman’s touch from the paper that “bear[s]...[her] hand” (122). His actions would break the (for him) literal connection between the banknotes (from whose fondling he derives pleasure) and the stain of his sister’s sexual activity. To follow Jason’s illocutionary logic, here, would be to recover from the dark ink of Caddy’s “hand,” the stain on her drawers, glimpsed by the child Jason on the day of Damuddy’s funeral (1898); one should note that Caddy’s tree-climbing initiates her brother into their sister’s

sexual nature.³⁰ What first appears to be merely a small-town clerk's theft and ill-advised gambling actually implicates him in the obsessions with family, memory, and sexuality that color the lives of the final generation of Compson men.

Second, because of this polyvalent familial connection, Jason's attempts at money laundering comprise what philosopher Herbert Fingarette terms a "self-covering" strategy, a refusal of illocutionary action. For Fingarette, a self-deceiver is one who refuses to make an explicit verbal acknowledgement (or "spelling out") some aspect of her engagement in the world (46). On this account, because "the forms of human existence" are intrinsically tied to language, a practical reliance on language (even a tacit one) is engaged in nearly all human activity (45).³¹ Hence, Jason's money-laundering represents a "self-covering" technique: a way to avoid explicit recognition ("spelling out") of the incestuous connections among his sister, niece, and banknotes. Crucially, the use of "self-covering" allows Jason to act on the tacit knowledge of the notes' sexual associations while *avoiding* the illocutionary act ("spelling out") that would render such links fully "conscious."³² Jason's transmission of his money into the financial market allows him to avoid recognition of his troubling impulses and would, if successful, constitute the sort of

³⁰ That blackness and ink carry the association of sexual knowledge here is suggested by some remarks of Faulkner's on the experience of writing. He describes *The Sound and the Fury* as providing him with an "ecstasy, that eager and joyous faith and anticipation of surprise which the yet unmarred sheet beneath [his] hand held inviolate and unflinching, waiting for release" ("An Introduction" 225). Similarly, Jason's banknotes, like the muddy drawers for which they substitute, are no longer "unmarred."

³¹ An example of such tacitly linguistic behavior would be stopping at a traffic light. Although no verbal cues are explicitly present, the underlying knowledge necessary to use traffic-lights is verbal in character.

³² Fingarette goes on to state that in cases of self-covering, "**there will be 'breaks' or gaps as one comes near the hidden area in question: certain memories, perceptions, desires, actions...now are not spelled out**" [emphasis mine] (48). Such "breaks" may explain why Jason's headaches and blackouts tend to occur when he thinks of Miss Quentin.

contradiction-obviating “strategy” defined by Amélie Rorty: Jason would both deny his basest desires and transcend the undesirable aspects of himself.³³

Of course, Jason is not the first Compson to harbor such a vision of transcendence. The connection between Jason’s financial operations and his brothers’ obsessions with Caddy can be unpacked further by examining it alongside his brothers’ monologues. Benjy, incapable of sophisticated cognitive processes and thus untroubled by incest taboos, merely clings to Caddy’s memory – mentally returning to earlier episodes in his life and physically hoarding objects related to her. In contrast, the elder Compson brothers devise complicated mental operations for navigating the simultaneous feelings of shame, denial, and incestuous desire evoked by their sister. For Quentin, near the end of his life, this navigation takes the form of a suicide-fantasy involving him and Caddy: “...if people could only change one another forever that way merge like a flame swirling up for an instant then blown cleanly out along the cool eternal dark...”(111). In conversation with him, Mr. Compson recognizes this fantasy for what it is: “an apotheosis in which a temporary state of mind will become symmetrical above the flesh and aware both of itself and of the flesh it will not quite discard...” (112). Quentin imagines cycling his own sacred object, the thought of Caddy’s virginity, through an abstracting process (“[merging] like a flame”) that would purify it (“above the flesh”). Jason’s money-laundering operation, with its processing of a sacred object (banknotes) through an abstracting operation (finance capital) constitutes a materialist echo of the pious Quentin’s “apotheosis” fantasy. Small

³³ This is far from the only instance in which Jason refuses to spell out his engagements. See his description of his father’s funeral: “...I got to thinking about that and watching them throwing dirt into it, slapping it on anyway like they were making mortar or something or building a fence, and I began to feel sort of funny...” (127). Jason’s repetition of “feeling funny” moments later suggests his phrasing is less a verbal tic than a sign of his reluctance to introspect. Whatever his intellectual limits, Jason surely possesses the capacity to describe his feelings in more detail (e.g. “sad”); his failure to do so, then, must be read as an act of will, a refusal to make explicit the emotions that discomfit him.

wonder, then, that Jason spends so much of his day frantically trying to “get [his] money back” (165).

At a more linguistic level, Jason’s illocutionary bets on the New York Cotton Exchange also recapitulate a general feature of illocutionary acts – what Marazzi calls their “crisis” – that is to say, their attempt to erase their own causal history as *spoken* words (35). Were Jason’s financial machinations successful, his new profits would have the appearance of arising from the financial ether, without the troubling causal history attached to his current hoard, “a purely abstract currency to be gained and lost” (Matthews, *Sound* 67). The stakes of Jason’s bets are dizzyingly high: His wagers would, if felicitous, reconcile the inconsistencies of his doubled class-identity, erase the troubled causal history of his ill-gotten banknotes, and provide a “cover” to incestuous desires for his sister and niece. Given the immense risks involved, it comes as little surprise that his bets head sharply in the opposite direction.

Shorting a futures contract is a multi-step process – it begins with the borrowing of a single unit of a commodity (in Jason’s case, fifty thousand pounds of cotton), and involves the borrower’s promise to sell that unit back at a new price in the future. If the price of the unit drops between the time of purchase and the time of sale, then the trader may pocket an amount equal to the difference between the sale price and initial purchase price (“Short Sales” par.1-2). However, the trade has its dangers; while a trader may make some profit on a price drop, she also remains exposed (potentially to infinity) if the price of the aforementioned commodity shoots up. Just such a precipitous price rise occurs on April 6, 1928: During Jason’s pursuit of Miss Quentin and the carnival pitchman, he misses a number of industry reports, and the cotton price skyrockets “from the intraday low of 12.49 at noon...a whopping 813 points to 20.62” (Westbrook 57).

The upward swing is so violent that Jason's margin account no longer has the funds to cover his short position, and "[closes] at 20.62," leaving Jason with a loss that Westbrook estimates at over four thousand dollars, though Jason refuses to tabulate the value of his transactions unless they turn in his favor (57). Jason's afternoon of frantic obsession with his niece's sexuality (he spends most of his day chasing after Miss Quentin and a carnival employee) has subverted his attempt to launder her legacy out of the stolen money. Had he succeeded, Jason might have "self-[transformed]" in the way Rorty describes: unifying the contradictory strands of his identity and papering over an incestuous obsession with a financial one. Instead, his failure leaves Jason so enraged that he controverts the advice of his New York advisors, who tell him to sell and cover his losses: "Buy, I wrote, Market just on point of blowing its head off. Occasional flurries for the purpose of hooking a few more country suckers who haven't got in to the telegraph office yet" (153). Unable to stop his niece from "playing out of school" or to enact his desired financial scheme, Jason reverts to his earlier inconsistency: extracting a moral victory against the New York "jews" while deepening his losses.

V. Jason Unravels

As I have argued above, the monologue of April 6, 1928 shows Faulkner constructing the features of Jason's performed identity: His reliance on stereotypes, schemes of theft and self-deception, and pose of aggressive masculinity. Taken together, these illocutionary and social strategies represent an attempt to bend reality to his will. In turn, the narrative of April 8 traces Jason's path as his pattern of counterfactual insistence meets with an antithetical reaction from the world of the text. Jason may be able to impose his will on the verbalized interior world of his monologue, but the externalized narrative of the final chapter reveals the limits of these illocutionary and social strategies when met with uncongenial brute facts. With Miss Quentin's

theft of his hoard, Jason loses his metric of self-worth and confronts the limits of his stereotype-system. When he responds by giving chase and reasserting his performed persona, his “self-covering” strategy for internal management breaks down. Additionally, Jason’s violently comic confrontation with a carnival employee shows his indirect strategies of intimidation and social bluster collapsing in the face of genuine force. Taken together, Jason’s actions on April 8 follow through on the narrative logic of self-destruction that began in the earlier chapters.

If the internal monologue of April 6 shows Jason imposing definitions on the world around him through his repeated stereotypes, the externally-narrated events of Easter 1928 show him struggling as brute facts invalidate those definitions. In the case of Miss Quentin’s theft, Jason’s shock stems mostly from disbelief at the fact that others, whom he has defined as dupes for his subterfuge, penetrate even the most complex and devious of his schemes with ease. For Jason, this realization has the added effect of shaking his faith in the clichés that underlie nearly all his reasoning. Witness his response to the emptied “locked box”:

...he was hurtling things backward out of the closet, garments, shoes, a suitcase. Then he emerged carrying a sawn section of tongue-and-groove planking and laid it down and entered the closet again and emerged with a metal box. He set it on the bed and stood looking at the broken lock while he dug a keyring from his pocket and selected a key, and for a time he stood with the selected key in his hand, looking at the broken lock....Then he upended the box and shook it too and slowly replaced the papers and stood again, looking at the broken lock, with the box in his hands and his head bent. Outside the window he heard some jaybirds swirl shrieking past and away, their cries whipping in the wind.... (176)

Faulkner uses external focalization to evocative effect: the syntax of the passage, with its strings of complex sentences that refuse to terminate, and the unabridged repetition of Jason's "looking at the broken lock," suggest Jason's inability (or refusal) to assimilate this new reality. The description here distends with conjunctions and participial phrases, slowing the experience of reading to mirror a stunned Jason's repeated examinations of the box. Just as devastating as the loss of the actual money is the idea that his most private actions, the embezzlement and counting of Caddy's remittances, have been rendered public by his "bitch of a niece." The shrewdness displayed in Miss Quentin's theft not only challenges Jason's stereotypic dismissal of her as merely a "slut," but also threatens his vision of himself as a master conspirator (152). Faulkner further emphasizes the public nature of Jason's "secret" actions by including Dilsey's indifferent response: While Jason frantically telephones the police, Dilsey "looked at him, without stopping, and went on" (177). The events of this morning may bemuse Jason, but they come as little surprise to his more observant and sensitive servant. Stripped of the material tokens of his status, and with his concept-system faltering, Jason falls back upon his central technique of illocutionary assertion.

Although Jason's experience during the chase after Miss Quentin is often read as an involuntary paranoid delusion,³⁴ such interpretations ignore the essentially volitional character of Jason's fantasies. In this section, Faulkner details the collapse of Jason's fervently upheld performative edifice under the pressure of the external world of the novel. Jason's verbal and social persona, with its foundation of self-deception, is undone by something more fundamental – his body. Moments after fantasizing his triumph over the "legions of heaven and hell," Jason

³⁴ Bleikasten claims that Jason experiences "persecution fantasies" that "belong with symptoms of paranoia" (110), echoing Peavy's argument that Jason "organizes the observed...behavior of real and imagined persons into a conspiracy, with the paranoid as its focus" (151).

finds himself enfeebled by a headache.³⁵ In an attempt to evade his oncoming migraine, Jason escapes into an alternate vision of himself, one mediated by his illocutionary acts. Jason conjures a dream of sexual triumph: “he thought about Lorraine. He imagined himself in bed with her, only he was just lying beside her, pleading with her to help him, then he thought of the money again, and that he had been outwitted by a woman, a girl...by the very symbol of the lost job itself” (191).

Bereft of his stolen cache, Jason is impotent even in his fantasies (“only he was *just* lying beside her”), a moment that recalls his early childhood habit of sharing a bed with Damuddy (17). Moreover, with Jason’s bets soured and his money disappeared, the performative trace linking his money to sexual desire rises to the surface. The thought of sex with Lorraine - his prostitute - leads him immediately to thoughts of the missing money, itself the product of Caddy’s acts of prostitution. The (now less implicit) thought of Caddy (“a woman”), in turn, leads back to the “girl” – his missing niece, who is both “symbol” of the lost job and metonym for her absent mother. This instant, with its complex associative chain, shows Jason’s mental self-image collapsing around him: Without the disposable income that has sustained his whoremongering and financial gambling, he can no longer maintain his masculine power-fantasy; no longer able to “cover” the associations between his money and incestuous impulses, he is forced to confront his erotic desire for his niece. Unable to openly acknowledge this attraction (and the implied connection to the lingering specter of Caddy’s sexuality), Jason suffers another blackout (191), similar to the blindness that had overtaken him on April 6, when Miss Quentin threatened to tear her dress in public (118). In the absence of the banknotes he had

³⁵ Again, Jason on April 8 reckons with his past theft: The headache is caused by gasoline fumes from the car purchased with money stolen from Caroline (191).

employed as an illocutionary proxy, Jason can no longer paper over his attraction to his niece as an obsession with family honor or restitution for the “lost job.”³⁶


Where his infelicitous fantasy and Miss Quentin’s theft merely disturb Jason’s self-confidence, Faulkner includes two figures that assault Jason’s self-concept more directly. These agents, an old man and a sign, complete Jason’s self-destructive arc by turning back on him his verbal weapons of threat and implication. Half-blind and barely able to pilot his car, Jason follows his niece’s path to the travelling carnival in Mottson. After locating the carnival’s sleeping cars, Jason attempts to bully an old man into divulging Miss Quentin’s location: “‘Don’t lie,’ Jason said. ‘Where are they?’... ‘What’s that?’ the other said. ‘Who you calling a liar?’” (192). In the confrontation that follows, the man’s rage derives not from Jason’s physical actions, but his illocutionary ones “‘Call me a liar,’ the other wailed... ‘I’ll show you’” (192). Like the stock market that has denuded Jason of his financial capital, the old man endangers Jason by taking him at his word. The nature of this danger becomes clear during their ensuing physical struggle:

“‘You bastard,’” the other shrieked, scrabbling at the table. Jason tried to grasp him in both arms, trying to prison the puny fury of him. The man’s body felt so old, so frail, yet so fatally singlepurposed that for the first time Jason saw clear and unshadowed the disaster toward which he rushed. (192)

Here, Jason’s performative self – sustained by threats and assertions of virility – implodes in the face of the genuine “singlepurposed[ness]” of a geriatric’s authentic death threat. That Faulkner

describes the threat as “unshadowed” recalls Quentin’s obsession with his own shadow ³⁷ on the day of his suicide in 1910 (52); thus, in grappling with the old man Jason, too, confronts a deathly version of himself. ³⁸ The “puny” old man overwhelms Jason because he takes as serious the illocutionary tokens of masculinity and honor that Jason employs so casually. If Jason experiences an epiphany in this moment, it consists in glimpsing his own inauthenticity, the failure of his social and verbal strategies to bend the world (or even one man) to his will.

The violence of Jason’s struggle with and escape from the old man masks the intrusion of another textual double-figure, one which mirrors Jason’s illocutionary habits in more abstract and less obvious ways. Retreating from the sleeping car and disoriented by another of his blackouts, Jason encounters a sign:

“Keep going,” the other said. He led Jason on around the corner of the station, to the empty platform where an express truck stood, where grass grew rigidly in a plot bordered with rigid flowers and a sign in electric lights: Keep your  on Mottson, the gap filled by a human eye with an electric pupil. The man released him. (193)

Appearing at this crucial moment in the novel, the sign – with its distinctive eye-pictogram – carries several illocutionary forces. Most basically, its directive illocution voices a New South slogan. For Jason, though, the sign carries a more profound indirect message. By replacing the verbal “eye” with its pictorial equivalent, Faulkner points back to the novel’s initial moment of vision: The Compson brothers’ collective glimpse of Caddy’s “muddy drawers” during the funeral in 1898, the “primal scene” that introduced knowledge of both death and

³⁷ “Quentin’s own shadow...comes to represent for him time and death...the dark side of himself that he is trying to escape” (Ross and Polk 53).

³⁸ Faulkner strengthens this connection with the question a circus employee poses to Jason: “What were you trying to do? commit suicide?” (193).

sexuality into their lives.³⁹ The black visual density of the graphic “eye” in turn recalls the other inky traces of Caddy’s presence (the banknotes, the letters) that Jason has struggled to erase from his life, to paper over by force of his illocutions. Like the content of one of his own indirect speech acts, the apotheosis of Jason’s failures hangs before him, suspended between words.

At a more abstract level, the eye-pictogram signals an additional layer of illocutionary force, one directed at Faulkner’s audience. The appearance of an electric eye surveying a desolate town recalls the eye of Dr. T.J. Eckleburg in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, where such a sign expresses the “external blindness” of materialist over-reach (Fitzgerald 24).⁴⁰ Faulkner’s pictorial gesture thus performs what philosopher David Novitz terms a “pictorial illocution,” in which a picture is used to perform an illocutionary act that draws on the picture’s representational content (149). To recapitulate, Faulkner employs the electronic sign to numerous illocutionary ends: By alluding to Damuddy’s funeral, the sign revisits upon him the aggressive innuendo with which he has tormented his sister and niece. Further, the sign’s pictorial allusion provides a rhetorical signal to Faulkner’s modernist readers: As with those of Fitzgerald’s “wild wag of an oculist,” Jason’s efforts to stamp his self-fashioned values upon the world have failed.

In the scene that follows, Faulkner intimates the consequences of this particular failure. Having abandoned his pursuit of Miss Quentin, Jason Compson, whom Faulkner described as a metonym for the whole “New South,” (qtd. in Storhoff 526) is shown denuded of his performative self-stylings: “a man sitting quietly behind the wheel of a small car, with his invisible life ravelled out around him like a worn-out sock” (195). Unable to ignore the

³⁹ Waid 238-9

⁴⁰ See Ross and Polk 187

consequences of his niece's escape, Jason can no longer control his headaches and must beg two young "negro" men for a ride home. This scene shows Jason stripped bare: bereft of the money that comforts him and sustains his financial activity, and forced to invalidate the social hierarchy he defends by appealing to his ostensible social inferiors for help. While Jason's "defeat" here is often regarded as a temporary setback for a relentless man,⁴¹ the account that I have given of Jason's psychology and social actions suggests a different reading. Miss Quentin's departure signals both the loss of Jason's secret hoard and the likely end of Caddy's remittances, the very funds that have sustained his financial speculation, relationship with Lorraine, and pretense of business acumen, as well as the mechanism for his sexual control of his niece. While Jason may, as Faulkner's Appendix suggests, restore his finances eventually, he would have to do so without the illocution-based performed identity that he struggles to maintain in 1928.

VI. Jason and Shegog, or Solipsism and Collectivity

Jason's failure to impose his will on the world, to make his words an effective medium for actions, becomes most obvious when he is read alongside another textual double – the Reverend Shegog. A visiting preacher from St Louis,⁴² Shegog delivers to Jefferson's black congregation an Easter sermon that parallels thematically and chronologically Jason's futile pursuit of Miss Quentin and the stolen money; moreover, Faulkner's closely related descriptions of the two men suggest a deeper thematic link. More than a powerful evocation of African-American spirituality or exemplum of ecclesiastical oration (though it's these, too), Shegog's sermon stands as one of

⁴¹ Matthews writes that "Jason returns home delayed but not defeated" (*The Play*, 114), Faulkner's own appendix shows an older Jason fulfilling his dream of becoming a cotton trader (212).

⁴² The hometown of Herbert Head and location of Jason's "stolen" bank job.

the few moments of communion and connection in a novel marked by despair, occlusion, and loss. The sermon carries such unifying power because the reverend succeeds in actions that Jason can only attempt: Shegog's illocutionary acts influence his audience in the ways he desires, and the congregants in turn accept and take part in his social performance. While several critics have read the similarities between Shegog and Jason in religious terms,⁴³ less attention has been paid to the parallels between their speech and social actions. In what follows, I will enumerate the central features of Shegog's sermon in the hopes of reading his successful performance alongside Jason's defective one, with the aim of helping to explain Jason's larger failure.

Reverend Shegog's most prominent feature, one that links him instantly to Jason,⁴⁴ is his voice. The variations in Shegog's vocal delivery underscore the power of his oral performance, which Faulkner details throughout the episode. The preacher's chameleonic voice connects him almost instantly with a congregation of strangers. When Shegog first appears, the congregation views him as "insignificant looking," with a "wizened face like a small, aged monkey" (182). However, this skepticism dissipates when they hear the "cold, inflectionless wire" of his voice, which resembles a white man's (183). As the church choir begins to sing, the narrator signals a further shift in the audience's perception of Shegog's voice: no longer "a white man's" or "his voice," it becomes simply "a voice" (183). "As different as day and dark from his former tone," this new modulation has "a sad, timbrous quality like an alto horn" (183). Significantly, where Shegog's original, "white" voice had inspired only curiosity from the congregation, this new, musical variant "[sinks] into their hearts...in fading and cumulate echoes" (183).

⁴³ Kinney (158), Bleikasten (130).

⁴⁴ Mellard writes that, in the monologue, Faulkner creates the impression that Jason is "telling his story directly to the reader" in an oral manner, even seeming to "usurp the role of author" (196). Similarly, Bleikasten opens his chapter on Jason by stating that Faulkner presents "a hysterically self-assertive *speaking* voice" (105).

In the lines that follow, Shegog's voice and his communion with the audience intensify, and Faulkner's descriptions further link this episode to Jason's simultaneous actions. Having engaged his audience with his "horn"-like voice, Shegog shifts closer to black vernacular⁴⁵, "'I got the recollection and the blood of the Lamb!'" (183). The dialectal shift here signals a deeper change in the speech-situation of the sermon, one that does not become apparent until several paragraphs later: "a long moaning expression of breath rose from them, and a woman's single soprano: 'Yes, Jesus!'" (183). By altering the dialect of his sermon,⁴⁶ Shegog initiates a "call-response" dialogue, a discourse technique that "serves to unify the preacher with [his] audience" (Wharry 205). As Shegog slides further into dialectal usage and "negroid" pronunciation, so his auditors become further engaged in his sermon: five of the seven quoted congregation "responses" occur after Shegog's final vocal shift (184-5). This intense audience involvement matters because it signals a shift in the social structure of the sermon. According to the linguist Cheryl Wharry, in the call-response situation "preacher and congregation *jointly produce* the sermon"; the audience takes on a shaping role, assuming a degree of agency that is absent from other liturgical events [emphasis mine] (223).

In addition to depicting Shegog's involvement with his auditors, Faulkner includes a number of textual cues that establish the reverend's position as Jason's performative double. Most saliently, Shegog employs a series of assertive illocutionary acts that aligns him with Jason: "I sees the light en I sees de word...I tells you, breddren, en I tells you, sistuhn, dey'll come a time...." (184). In both the truth-claiming logical form of its assertive locutions and its dialectal conjugations ("I sees," "I tells," "I hears"), Shegog's oration recalls Jason's idiolect. However,

⁴⁵ Technically African American Vernacular English (AAVE)

⁴⁶ It's likely that Shegog performs additional speech acts between his initial vernacular-change and the first quoted audience participation; however, Faulkner's "textual... 'compression'" (Rimmon-Kennan 53) omits smaller events.

where Jason's declamations of his social standing or knowledge are met with (at best) incredulity by his listeners, Shegog's audience responds to his with repeated affirmations (184). The efficacy of Shegog's voice carries over to his physical performance, as well: After evoking verbal responses from his congregants, the reverend engages them physically: "...his monkey face lifted and his whole attitude that of a serene, tortured crucifix that transcended its shabbiness and insignificance and made it of no moment" (183). Because Shegog has by now drawn in his audience with his voice and appealed to them with his communally sanctioned assertions, his physical performance carries additional significance: Viewed through the collective eye of the congregation, he appears "almost *in persona Christi*" (Hein 7).

Beyond the general parallels between the speech-acts and social performances of the two men, Faulkner includes a scene that renders the resemblance concrete. Only minutes after the conclusion of Shegog's sermon, Jason has an encounter with the Sheriff of Jefferson that crystallizes the nature of his social failings. While beginning his pursuit of Miss Quentin, Jason attempts to coerce the aid of Jefferson's sheriff, employing the same illocutionary strategies he uses to bully women and servants. He begins with a directive, an order: "Get your hat, Sheriff" (188). After this fails, Jason shifts to indirect illocution, a threat: "Am I going to have to go to the law to compel you to do your sworn duty?" (188). Unable to force the sheriff's cooperation by either verbal aggression or appeal to common institutional standards (laws), Jason appeals to the Sheriff's sympathy, giving a narrative of the crime: "Jason told him, his sense of injury and impotence feeding upon its own sound, so that after a time he forgot his own haste in the violent cumulation of his self justification and his outrage" (188). Compare this with Shegog's speech at its rhetorical apex: "And the congregation seemed to watch with its own eyes while the voice consumed him, until he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but

instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words....” (183).

The numerous overt resemblances between these two descriptions indicate that Faulkner’s pairing of them is deliberate.⁴⁷ The contrast with the Shegog scene serves only to emphasize the failure of Jason’s attempt to connect with the Sheriff: Where Shegog’s personified voice “feeds” on his (performing) body and thereby intensifies his communion with the congregation, Jason’s voice loops back narcissistically onto itself (183). Further, where Shegog’s performance condenses the whole congregation into a single social unit that watches with “*its own eyes*” [my italics] (182), Jason’s prompts only a “cold” and unsympathetic gaze from his interlocutor (188). This abject failure to elicit sympathy from even a public servant highlights another aspect of Jason’s character: Every relationship he has, every interpersonal interaction in the novel, is marked by conflict and resistance. He mocks his mother, abuses his servants, insults his coworkers, and even communicates with his prostitute mostly by means of threats and insults.⁴⁸ The contrast between Jason’s speech and Shegog’s reveals the price of Jason’s verbal effort to bend the world to his will: For all his social engagement, Jason’s inner life remains totally occluded from even those closest to him.

If Faulkner’s deliberate doubling of Jason and Shegog reveals the former’s solipsism, it also sheds light on the latter’s rhetorical power. Critics have generally attributed the sermon’s positive influence to the tradition of African-American spirituality,⁴⁹ theological content,⁵⁰ or

⁴⁷ As Davis notes, Faulkner doesn’t capture the ‘verbal virtuosity’ of Shegog’s performance so much as describe its effects; the same holds for Jason’s narration, which the novelist describes in externally focalized terms (*Faulkner’s Negro*, 121-2).

⁴⁸ To Lorraine: “...if you ever try to call me up on the telephone, Memphis won’t hold you, I says” (122).

⁴⁹ “...the sermon reaffirms the solidarity of the black community in the face of ever present oppression from without” (Matthews, *Sound* 83).

⁵⁰ (Kartiganer, “The Sound” 637)

musical quality.⁵¹ While such readings capture essential aspects of the sermon, none of them accounts sufficiently for Benjy's involvement in the ritual:

In the midst of the voices and the hands Ben sat, rapt in his sweet blue gaze. Dilsey sat bolt upright beside crying rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered lamb. (185)

Benjy's "rapt" attention and "sweet" gaze stand out here for an absence: Of the few moments of quietude we see Benjy experience in April 1928, this moment is the only one not to involve symbols or memories of Caddy.⁵² This aberration raises a further question: How, as an outsider, does Shegog manage to engender such feeling?

Because Benjy lacks the intellectual resources to follow the sermon's religious message, or the linguistic faculties to participate in the call-response dynamic that enfolds the other auditors, the sources of his social involvement must lie elsewhere – in a more basic capacity.⁵³ Olga Kuminova comes close to capturing it when she describes the sermon as retreating "into the...physical realities of rhythm and sound that the body has before it has language" (57). This pre-linguistic quality recalls Margaret Gilbert's description of the phenomenology of collective action: "[one] may experience oneself part of a flowing, wordless, harmonious system, in which one's movements seem 'called for' by the movements of the [others]. At such points one may...have moved close to the mode of social life of some non-human creatures" (224). According to Gilbert, such feelings of "wordless" harmony with others occur as the subjective consequence

⁵¹ (Bleikasten 140)

⁵² Benjy tends to be comforted by either memories of Caddy, or objects associated with her (slipper, flowers, the fireplace).

⁵³ Also worth emphasizing is Faulkner's agnosticism about Shegog and Dilsey's beliefs: "Faulkner makes no claim for Dilsey's version of Christianity one way or another" (Brooks 137).

of joint activity. For Benjy, whom Faulkner so often renders in animal terms,⁵⁴ Gilbert's description of collective experience approaching that of "non-human creatures" proves revealing: Though he may lack the intellectual resources to grasp the sermon's religious message, Benjy can take some part in the "chanting measures beyond the need for words" (183).

I should clarify my point, here, as its stakes are rather lower than they might seem. Eric Sundquist writes that careless readers have accepted the over-arching truth of the sermon "because they are taken in by its pose of cathartic naturalism" (13). While Sundquist is correct to reject the veracity of the sermon's metaphysical truth-claims, my interest lies with the "pose" itself. Shegog's religious vision, like the narratives of the earlier sections, remains contained: Although Dilsey immediately after the sermon claims to have "seed de first en de last," she remains unable to re-articulate her moment of vision when outside the church (185). Nevertheless, even in the absence of a transcendental framework of meaning, the congregation's moment of "wordless" harmony stands out in the novel. In particular, the "sweet blue gaze" that a silent Benjy experiences in the black church contrasts sharply with the "eyeless" "agony" of his pained "roar" engendered by Luster at the novel's end (199). In the church scene, Faulkner depicts a moment of intersubjective connection which, if it does not offer a redemptive answer to the solipsistic anxieties of the Compson chapters, at least suggests a potential source for such an answer – in the fundamental, human capacities for connection and collective intention.⁵⁵ I believe it is the pursuit of this intuition that led Faulkner to create, in *Absalom, Absalom!*, an extended version of such intersubjective, mutual self-constitution. In their joint narrative of the Sutpen family, Shreve McCannon and Quentin Compson share an experience that might just as easily describe the

⁵⁴ "a trained bear," (171), "[a] gelding" (176), "a big foolish dog" (185), and in one almost Joycean phrase: "a bear," "a cow," and "a hog" (158).

⁵⁵ Fittingly, collective intentionality of this sort is a necessary condition for the higher-order social phenomena that Jason fights to preserve (Searle, *Freedom* 85).

relation between Shegog and his auditors: “a growing sense of communion, of...[collective action] as a cooperation of minds, the speakers gradually giving themselves up to each other as the only means of giving themselves to [the story] they are trying to comprehend” (Kartiganer, *Fragile* 98).

VII. Conclusion

To recapitulate, both Jason and Quentin Compson confront a uniquely modern problem: How to find meaningful modes of action in the absence of the linguistically grounded institutions that guaranteed such significance in the past. While Quentin’s narrative is widely recognized as the more complex and thematically interesting of the two responses, I have argued that Jason’s story has a degree of psychological and textual interest that is left untouched even by the sensitive readings of contemporary critics such as Davis and Matthews.⁵⁶ Accessing these additional features of Jason’s narration required the imposition of a new set of theoretical tools from the philosophies of language, mind, and social science. Jason’s monologue catalogs a particular response to modernity: One of instability and resistance. Where Quentin Compson refused entirely to engage with the changing world, Jason’s response is less overt. In detailing the working of Jason’s inner life, Faulkner gives a “radioscopy” of a mind encased a particular kind of solipsism: Engaged in the wider social world, but in many ways resistant to self-understanding or connection with those around him. Jason’s monologue, then, constitutes what Caracciolo calls a “consciousness text” – a phenomenology of self-deception and isolation much as Benjy’s monologue is one of autism.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ And these are themselves vast improvements over the cartoonish interpretations present in the work of early critics such as Brooks.

⁵⁷ Caracciolo, “Fictional Consciousnesses: A Reader’s Manual”

As I have shown, Jason's narrative records his extended attempt to alter the external and psychological conditions of his life. By 1928, shifts in the family finances and wider Southern economy threaten the social hierarchy that Jason values, the one that assigns him an elevated place as the scion of a plantocratic family. Unable to sell off more land or draw on other resources, Jason moves to counteract these historical developments with the only tools available - words. In the public world of Jefferson, Jason adopts a number of illocutionary strategies (distinctive modes of thinking, talking, and writing) chosen to project his design onto the world. Of these, his characteristic, "I says," reveals the most: With no other means of demonstrating his authority or status, Jason does so by insisting, as if to verbally impose his beliefs onto those around him. By means of such assertive illocutionary acts, Jason projects an idealized version of himself: Jason as both paternalist aristocrat and modern financier.

The pattern of insistence recurs in his use of stereotypes, linguistic concepts that derive their sense of "probabilistic truth" from repetition; in turn, the universality of his stereotypic beliefs, along with the degree to which they saturate his thinking and public speech, show Jason attempting to fix the social world around him to meet his requirements. An appeal to John Searle's writing on social institutions reveals the underlying logic here: social institutions such as hierarchies (like those implicit in Jason's stereotypes) depend upon "collective recognition or acceptance" for their existence (*The Construction* 95). One way that individuals and collectives ensure the continued existence of such hierarchies is through forced talk, which "functions to maintain and reinforce both the institution and the institutional facts" (Searle, *Making* 104). More than a string of thoughtless clichés, Jason's speech-patterns constitute an assault on his social world.

However, these distinctive speech-patterns extend beyond mere assertion. Jason also employs a number of indirect speech acts – irony, allusion, and innuendo. In tracing the illocutionary logic of his indirect speech, we see that Jason’s avowed identity also involves numerous balancing acts: between the unpalatable legacies of two families, between Old and New Souths, between sexual attraction toward and resentment of his niece, between insistence on his autonomy and dependence on his sister’s money. In contrast to the public persona marked by its incessant assertions and knowledge-claims, the speech-acts that saturate his interior monologue all center on avoiding direct statements and explicit acknowledgements.

These efforts at avoidance and erasure reach their apex in Jason’s actions on the New York Cotton Exchange. Attending to the illocutionary acts that constitute and motivate Jason’s financial wagers reveals his cotton speculation to be far more than a mere hobby. Having established a performative chain leading from Caddy’s broken promise to the contract money produced by her (effective) prostitution and the black “trace” of her signature on the letters, we see that Jason’s efforts to pass his ill-gotten banknotes through the financial system represent attempted money-laundering, massive bets that would (if successful) validate his assertions of knowledge, authenticate his unstable identity, and permit him to disavow incestuous desires for Caddy and her daughter. Further, the success of Jason’s large-scale trading strategies would resolve the inconsistencies in his public identity, allowing him to find an acceptable social position between “redneck” farmers and “Eastern jews.” The colossal failure of these wagers, along with Miss Quentin’s escape with his hoarded cache, signals the collapse of Jason’s verbal edifice.

On April 6, 1928, Jason sets in motion a number of textual processes that culminate in disaster on Easter Sunday. Where he has asserted intellectual and social superiority to Miss Quentin, she outwits him, flouting his performed identity and stealing the banknotes which form

its material basis. Bereft of the funds that support his financial strategies, Jason can no longer sustain the self-deceptive avoidance that permitted him to disavow the realities of his life. Finally, Faulkner turns Jason's performative and illocutionary strategies back upon him in two double-figures. In the old man, Jason confronts an intensified version of himself – hyperbolically dedicated to the social codes that Jason only purports to represent, and hence willing to fight to the death over a single utterance. For this figure, more even than for Jason, words equal other forms of action; thus, in the old man, Faulkner gives the lie to the content of Jason's assertive illocutions.

Analogously, in the glowing, electric “eye” of the Mottson sign, Faulkner turns Jason's indirect illocutions back upon him. The enjoinder to keep his “eye” on Mottson, the scene of his failure to capture Miss Quentin, mocks Jason with all the sarcastic cruelty he inflicts on those around him. Further, the presence of the graphic icon at the center of the sign reminds Jason of his most pronounced failure: the inability to erase Caddy's presence from his life, to counteract the deterministic pattern of death and decline that hangs over the Compson family. In the appearance of the eye, the empirical reality that Jason has attempted to alter and avoid by force of his assertives and self-deception confront him undeniably.

The presence of the wordless “eye” at the dénouement of Jason's section also reminds readers of a further role Jason plays in the text. As I have argued here, Jason's section records his extended attempt to counteract economic and cultural shifts in the world around him by means of words; to impose, by means of a huge array of verbal tools and strategies, his will upon both his internal and external lives. While the Reverend Shegog has been interpreted as an allegorical figure for the author (Matthews, *Play* 108), the pattern I have described suggests that Shegog is not alone in this function. Like the avant-garde Faulkner of the 1920s, Jason attempts to impose his design – his preferred narrative structure – on his world. That Jason's narrative concludes with a moment

when words fail, when reality resists all attempts at verbal fixity, shows him as a figure for the modernist author himself, the Faulkner who so often described this work as a “failure”: a man struggling unsuccessfully to impose his desired form upon the changing world before him.⁵⁸

Having established the failure of Jason’s attempt at self-determination, Faulkner also offers an alternative vision in the sermon scene near the novel’s end. In terms of both description and thematic content, Jason’s final pursuit of Miss Quentin parallels Reverend Shegog’s Easter sermon. Faulkner takes care to ascribe to both men not only similar habits of speech, but also parallel illocutionary and social actions: each exhorts a social audience to aid him in a collective endeavor. However, where Jason’s attempts to enjoin the aid of others leave him only more isolated, Shegog’s call for his listeners to “see” as he does succeed. By engaging his auditors in a call-response dynamic and joining them into one “wordless” entity, Shegog engenders a moment of communion and intimacy that involves even Benjy, the most occluded of the novel’s characters. However fleeting, the presence of the connection between Benjy and those around him also suggests that the solipsism endemic to the novel’s first three sections remains contained, rather than all-encompassing.

To conclude, Jason’s narrative records a particular line of response to the modern problem advanced by Tate, one that asserts individual volition as the arbiter of meaning. With the economic conditions and social system that secured his family’s position in the past now fading, Jason attempts to maintain that position through sheer individual force – using a variety of illocutionary and social tactics to shape persons (including himself) and institutions to his autochthonous will. However, as the novel progresses, the external facts of the world begin to overwhelm his asserted

⁵⁸ Gwynn and Blotner, 61

counterfactuals, and the self-deceptive “gaps” in his inner life outstrip his attempts to paper them over. The strategies that Jason has devised to secure and stabilize his identity and relations with others leave him instead radically isolated, mourning an inner life whose details he cannot articulate fully to anyone, even himself. While Bleikasten is correct in asserting that the details of Jason’s case are “too idiosyncratic” to be analogized to anyone else, the general features of his situation that I have outlined here - radical self-assertion in response to economic and social disruption - are not. In *Jason Compson IV*, “the novel’s most brilliantly drawn character” (Sundquist 12), Faulkner has created a limit case showing the dangers of a particular response to modernity. If Faulkner provides any response to the despairing, de-mythologized world described by Tate, it lies not in the radical individualism of Jason, but is instead suggested by Benjy’s encounter with the congregation, a moment that gestures toward an older system of shared belief, and hence an older form of collectivity.

CHAPTER TWO

The Ex[t]ensive Simplicity of the Divers: Narrative Voice, Psychological Development, and Intersubjectivity in Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*

I. Introduction – Voice, Group, Consensus

If Faulkner's text ends on a note of nostalgia for nineteenth-century social forms, then it is fitting that our next text begins in a similarly atavistic setting, albeit one situated closer to a European milieu. Virginia Woolf is helpful here: Writing on Augustus Hare's ponderous biography of two early Victorian aristocrats, she alights somewhat breezily upon one of the central features of psychic life in nineteenth century Britain:

They are not very distinct, it is true. For life then was not the life of Charlotte and Louisa. It was the life of families, of groups. It was a web, a net, spreading wide and enmeshing every sort of cousin, dependant, and old retainer. Aunts – Aunt Caledon, Aunt Mexborough – grandmothers – Granny Stuart, Granny Hardwicke – cluster in chorus, and rejoice and sorrow and eat Christmas dinner together, and grow very old and remain very upright, and sit in hooded chairs cutting flowers it seems out of coloured paper. (25-6)

Woolf refers to actual persons and events, but the psychological force of her observation carries over to fictional Victorians, just as easily. Nineteenth century novels such as *Middlemarch* focus on the “life of families” and “groups” through the perspective of a narrator who voices a “unified, collective vision” – the established consensus of a particular interpersonal group (Ermarth 40).⁵⁹ If we turn this psychological lens back to her paragraph, the “web” and “net” of

⁵⁹ I cite Ermarth because of her distinctive definition of realism (narratorial omniscience) as the product of psychological consensus, a conjunction of perspectives.

Woolf's description might be said to function as metaphors for the ways in which thought and emotion may be socially extended – shared between groups and individuals, what Alan Palmer terms “intermental units” (41). However, where the presence of an omniscient narrator renders consensus almost a *fait accompli* in realist novels of the sort described by Ermarth, intermental connection becomes more difficult in the murkier territory of modernist narrative, where social minds become “partial, fractured, and deeply dysfunctional” (Palmer 183).⁶⁰

In his 1934 novel, *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald traces the decline and supplanting of the nineteenth century form of mind adumbrated above, primarily through the character of Dick Diver. In this section, I will argue that in Book I, Fitzgerald establishes Dick as an emblem of the narrative consciousness of an earlier age. Dick's connection to earlier modes of thinking emerges from the confluence of two main traits: his overt link with narrative voice, and his more phenomenologically oriented capacity for assembling and inhabiting social environments. By outlining the stylistic and narrative techniques that Fitzgerald employs to render Dick as a socially and psychologically centripetal force early in the novel, I will also provide a basis for tracing the centrifugal counter-currents that dictate the pattern of decline and fragmentation throughout the remainder of the novel.

When Dick introduces the young starlet Rosemary Hoyt to his coterie, she observes that “his voice promised that he would take care of her, and that a little later he would open up whole new worlds for her, unroll an endless succession of magnificent possibilities” (16). That doe-eyed Rosemary detects a promissory note in Dick's speech is telling. As a figure for the “pre-war world” with its “assumed values of manners, courtesy, honor, and politeness in a stable and

⁶⁰ For all his attention to the title subject in *Social Minds in the Novel*, this brief remark on Ford's *The Good Soldier* is the *only* engagement Palmer's study has with the difficulties posed by social minds in modernist narrative; this chapter is (at least in part) an attempt to extend the social-minds perspective into modernism.

predictable society” (Stern 6), Dick, through his voice, channels many of the attributes of pre-war narrative consciousness. Levitt writes that the narrating personality of Thackeray’s novels works by assuring readers that “he knows all that there is to know about [his characters]...that they are sustained by his control” and that the universe is “eminently knowable”; the Victorian novelist thus acts as a paternal figure – “knowing all, telling all, controlling all” (Levitt 20-1).⁶¹ Ventriloquizing this pre-war perspective (“the dim conventions of the 1890s”), Dick’s voice serves a similar function, promising Rosemary a new kind of knowledge and access – if not the omniscient narratorial gift of Levitt’s Victorian narrator, then at least the promise of “care” - integration into the social and epistemological space delimited by the beach umbrellas.

However, Dick’s “promise,” the pervasive sense of omniscience that renders him so attractive (especially to young women), has a second source: his training as a psychiatrist. In particular, Dick has acquired Freud’s version of the psychoanalytic model (having studied under him in 1916)⁶². And the therapeutic goals of the Freudian model cannot be disentangled from the gender and class assumptions of its founder. In his 1895 collaboration with Breuer, *Studies in Hysteria*, Freud “worked out the fundamental technique of psychoanalysis” (Showalter 315) by applying his narrative method to women of the Viennese *haute bourgeoisie* (Micale 159). And at the center of this method is the Oedipus complex – the “major axis...of psychopathology” (Laplanche and Pontalis 283). Freud’s treatment of his most famous hysteric, Dora, is representative. Rather than attend to the details of Dora’s telling of her story, Freud imposes on it an “oedipal plot” of heterosexual desire, presses her to “confirm the pattern of social expectation

⁶¹ Compare Morton Levitt’s description of the Victorian novelist’s voice, as personified by Anthony Trollope: “And even so, Trollope felt the need to protect the reader: and, in protecting him, to shield his family, **especially that lowest common denominator, the young daughter**: it was her (imagined) sensibility that the Victorians set up as their guide for what may be said or must be said, for defining their world” [emphasis mine] (Levitt 20).

⁶² *TN* 115-116. It’s no accident that this is also the most intellectually productive period of Dick’s life; while in Vienna he authors the pamphlets that later form the “backbone” of his only publication (116).

for a girl of her class” – by accepting the dictates of her father (Garner 18). Psychoanalysis, on this picture, works in part to restore young women to paternal influence.

Dick Diver’s dual roles as Victorian *paterfamilias* and Freud-trained analyst are thus two variations on the same figure: Both serve paternal roles, “protecting” young women of a certain class and extraction by wielding different forms of narrative knowledge (moral and psychoanalytic). The magnetism of these combined knowledges renders Dick attractive to all in his societal purview, but he holds a particular sway over young women. And hence the sense of omniscience and confidence that Rosemary sees emanating from Dick in Book I, the feeling that Dick’s immense wealth of knowledge, of social and psychic metanarrative, can restore to everyone around him a sense of psychological unity and belonging. Dick thus acts as the integrative force for a group who might otherwise feel threatened by the socially centrifugal forces nascent in the wake of WWI. Playing the role of the Victorian American father: paternal, all-knowing, representative of pre-war notions of masculinity, class position, racial and national identity. To paraphrase Dick’s own description of the forces that led to the battle of the Somme, to those around him, he represents “religion and years of plenty and tremendous sureties and the exact relation that existed between classes....a whole-souled sentimental equipment going back further than you could remember” (57).⁶³

In the novel’s first two books, Fitzgerald establishes the personal magnetism of Dr. Diver via the narrative pathway of his voice, understood as both that of an individual and of the

⁶³ “Sentimental” is the crucial term here, given that Dick channels a set of values inherited from his father, a Southerner raised in the atmosphere of mid-nineteenth century American sentimentalism. According to Karen Halttunen, the culture of sentimentalism was “bourgeois self-congratulation” that Americans of the time “used to disguise the evils of the nineteenth-century social order they were ushering in” (Halttunen xiv). For Dick and his entourage, this means embracing the role of sentimental bourgeois father in order to disavow his sexual desire for young girls.

collectivity that individual perspective has curated. Dick's voice emanates an anachronistic narratorial omniscience grounded in divisions of race, gender, nationality, and class; as well as the plot-related "sureties" of the psychoanalytic narrative tradition. Brought together by the force of Dick's talents, and psychologically unified by the shared assumptions he enforces, his group forms an intersubjective unit, at the heart of which is "Dicole" – the intermental mind comprised by Dick and Nicole Diver. The interactions that take place within this latter unit, in turn, are the vehicle for the novel's social and symbolic arguments – episodes which invert the codes that maintained the atavistic harmony of Book I. After tracing the cracks in Dick's "fine glowing surface," I will then follow the voice of Nicole Diver, as it develops from a febrile and dependent force in her earliest letters, through its heavily gendered and developmental "transference" with Dick, to its emergence as the novel's dominant perspective, with the suggestion that this dominance is an ephemeral state. Beyond its inversion of the gendered and racialized class-codes on which Dick's atmosphere depends, the narrative voice that focalizes around Nicole also assaults the ideas of characterological wholeness or depth that underlie Dick's personal and professional roles, replacing them with a new, shallower basis for intermental unity – a transition that plays out primarily via the visual register of the text. This narrative transition leaves Dick, and the reader, in a space of discursive silence and ideological nullity.

II. Splitting Voices

Having established the means by which Fitzgerald in Book I associates Dick Diver's "voice" with older and more controlling forms of narratorial presence, in the section that follows I will trace the implications of that association. Where the opening of Book I presents Dick as having a voice capable of providing narrative control and "sureties," the chapters that follow trace the gradual dissolution of that voice – its loss of narrative control. Only by examining the

faults and internal inconsistencies that undo Dick's voice can we crystallize the often protean position of the novel's narrating consciousness, and it is only by examining the narrator's larger role will we be able to understand how Nicole's voice evolves from a secondary consideration into the novel's dominant perspective.

One moment at the center of the Divers' Villa Diana gathering, in particular, acts as a nodal point for the different narrative currents that run throughout the novel. Here, Fitzgerald presents Rosemary at her most youthful and credulous and the Divers as 'Dicole' – at their most unified and unifying; at the same time, though, the table scene acts as a moment of inflection – when the atavistic nineteenth century charms of Book I begin to give way to something else. At the height of the Divers' party, Fitzgerald presents this moment focused, initially at least, through Rosemary's eyes:

Rosemary, as dewy with belief as a child from one of Mrs. Burnett's vicious tracts, had a conviction of homecoming, of a return from the derisive and salacious improvisations of the frontier....The table seemed to have risen a little toward the sky like a mechanical dancing platform, giving the people around it a sense of being alone with each other in the dark universe, nourished by its only food, warmed by its only lights. And, as if a curious hushed laugh from Mrs. McKisco were a signal that such a detachment from the world had been attained, the two Divers began suddenly to warm and glow and expand, as if to make up to their guests, already so subtly assured of their importance, so flattered with politeness, for anything they might still miss from that country well left behind. Just for a moment they seemed to speak to every one at the table, singly and together, assuring them of their friendliness, their affection. And for a moment the faces turned up toward

them were like the faces of poor children at a Christmas tree. Then abruptly the table broke up....(34)

This scene, in addition to comprising one of the central moments of Book I, contains narrative and psychological valences that portend other events in the novel. At one level (that of Rosemary's unselfconscious vision), Fitzgerald shows the Dick and Nicole at the apex of their collective social power – condensed into an entity called the “Divers,” and able, via their attentions and assurances, to knit their disparate group of guests into a collective. In the lines that follow, the narrative voices communicates this sense of unity via what Palmer calls “intermental focalization,” signaling the diners' tentative intermental connection via modifiers that slide between individual and collective – “singly and together,” “alone with each other.” Despite their common national origin (“that country”), the guests derive their unity most from the expansive social powers of their hosts.

At another level, however, the narration of this passage also traces the cracks in the Divers' glittering domestic façade. The initial description of Rosemary as “dewy” with belief derived from a “vicious [tract]” casts a shadow over the scene that follows. Although the placement of the Divers and their guests as ringed around a table, “alone together,” evokes an anachronistic intermental unity, the narrator's description of that table as “mechanical” suggests something perfunctory and inauthentic about the camaraderie conjured around it. The increasing current of narratorial sarcasm overlying Rosemary's reported thoughts and perceptions points toward a central issue in the narration of *Tender Is the Night*, one that requires some clarification. Vološinov is helpful here: In experiencing irony, he writes, we “encounter in one voice...two incarnate value judgments and their interference with one another” (*Freudianism* 113). In the narrator's ironic evocation of Rosemary's thoughts, we see the collision of two “voices”:

Rosemary's uncritical adoration balanced against another vantage, one from which the Divers' charms appear mechanical, wooden, unconvincing.⁶⁴ This perspective cannot be easily identified with any character present in either of the novel's first two books, and tracking its often subtle and unclear movements is central to understanding the progress of the plot.

Much of the difficulty in placing the narratorial perspective of Book I lies in identifying a voice that appreciates the "dim conventions of the 1890s" without assenting to the Divers' performance of them. Kirk Curnutt, reading the moment of initial friction between Albert McKisco and Tommy Barban, identifies the narratorial voice as articulating an "aristocratic standard," an upper-class variant of the "stable" pre-war perspective often associated with Dick's manners (137). While Curnutt's reading captures accurately the ambivalence of the narrator's commentary, it also neglects the stylistic proximity of that commentary to strains in Dick's own thought and speech. This proximity becomes clearest in a moment late in Book I, when Dick stands waiting for Rosemary:

After three quarters of an hour of just standing around, he became suddenly involved in human contact. It was just the sort of thing that was likely to happen to him when he was in the mood not to want to see any one. So rigidly did he sometimes guard his exposed self-consciousness that frequently he defeated his own purposes; as an actor who underplays a part sets up a craning forward, a stimulated emotional attention in an audience, and seems to create in others an ability to bridge a gap he has left open.

⁶⁴ This critical tonality also casts a shadow over the scene's sentimental evocation of childhood; this familial scene, in the light of Dick's eventual romantic and sexual entanglements with under-aged girls, has a note of the sinister or perverse.

Similarly we are seldom sorry for those who need and crave our pity – we reserve this for those who by other means, make us exercise the abstract function of pity. (92)

On Curnutt's account, this moment serves to "[critique] Dick's theatricality, the façade of charisma he cultivates to fascinate his entourage and appease his need for recognition and love" (Curnutt 137). This argument falls tantalizingly short by stopping a beat too early: it fails to note that the bitterly critical narratorial commentary of this passage comes from Dick himself.

Most obviously, Dick's negative perspective on his own "theatricality" emanates from the very next sentence: "So Dick might, himself, have analyzed the incident..." (92). Following the internal self-criticism intimated in this moment, Dick's (indicated) voice from the Passy incident reveals more when placed alongside his words from the later portions of the story. Compare this moment to the explanation of acting that Dick gives to Rosemary near the novel's end:

'The danger to an actress is in responding. Again, let's suppose that somebody told you, 'Your lover is dead.' In life you'd probably go to pieces. But on the stage you're trying to entertain – the audience can do the 'responding' for themselves....You do the unexpected thing until you've manoeuvred the audience back from the objective fact to yourself.'

(288)

Although the two passages occur at some temporal remove, their status as the novel's only two discussions of acting technique begs comparison. Dick's words here, ostensibly in reference to one of Rosemary's films, in reality comment upon the former's "beautiful" manners. When Rosemary first encounters Dick, she sees him (like the actors he describes above) performing a "burlesque" on the Tames beach (6). However, by end of Book 3, Diver has taken to dismissing

his manners of Book I as “a trick of the heart” and bitterly recounts the methodology of his own “carnivals” of affection in the same technical acting-vocabulary employed by the narrator of the Passy scene – deliberately “under-playing” parts so as to manipulate an audience to “[doing] the responding.” To return for a moment to the earlier passage: “the abstract function of pity,” in the light of his later remarks, thus seems “abstract” because of its separation from any essential aspect of Dick. The early voice that “critiques Dick’s theatricality” (Curnutt 138) thus turns out to reflect an emergent strain in Dick’s vision of himself – one whose details become clear only much later in the novel.

If the complex relationship between narrative and focal voices described above seems obscure, we may turn for clarification to Bakhtin’s account of early Dostoevsky. Describing *The Double*, Bakhtin argues that the novella’s narrative dynamics arise from a conflict between the two internal voices of Golyadkin, the protagonist. On the one hand, there is Golyadkin’s “uncertain, timid” primary voice, which is balanced against a “confident” and “self-satisfied” secondary voice (*Problems* 177). As the two voices remain incommensurable, their “collision” generates an internal dialogic friction because the second voice remains slated against the primary one, “teasing, mocking, traitorous tones begin to appear in place of comforting, reassuring ones” (*Problems* 177). More interestingly, as the story progresses, the conflict between Golyadkin’s two internal tendencies grows more pronounced, and the protagonist’s internal psychic tensions bleed out into the narrative texture of the novella itself. Bakhtin writes that Golyadkin’s negative second voice “merges with the voice of the narrator,” and “the impression is created that the *narration is dialogically directed toward Golyadkin himself*” (*Problems* 181). That is, even though the narration remains “formally...directed toward the reader,” its overall narrative meaning has the effect of taunting the protagonist (*Problems* 181).

I should note: the parallel between Golyadkin's collapse in *The Double* and Dick Diver's gradual decline in *Tender* ought not be overstated. Fitzgerald's story lacks the solipsistic intensity of Dostoevsky's. Where Dostoevsky externalizes Golyadkin's "second voice" by way of the narrator and, eventually, the titular double, Fitzgerald's narrator works by more oblique methods – undercutting the positive view of the Divers held by Book I's focal characters. Instead of watching Dick collapse immediately, Fitzgerald's viewers witness the gradual loss of his "tensile strength" and self-confidence (65) – the social qualities that rendered him so central a figure at the novel's opening – in the face of mounting narratorial skepticism. By the time of the Passy scene, Rosemary's sense of Dick as "a model of correctness" has been counterbalanced by an emergent "second voice" (shared by both Dick and the narrator) that regards those same social graces as increasingly "fatuous" (91). This nascent divergence between the initial sense of Dick as a centripetal force and a second, internal sense of him as etiolated helps to explain the "qualitative shift" to which the narrator refers early in Book I. More importantly, having witnessed the ironic "interference" of the two narrative voices in Book I means that by the time Fitzgerald's readers encounter the young Dr. Diver, "at the very acme of bachelorhood" in Book II, his many "Achilles heels" come as little surprise (117).

However, before moving into the extended catalogue of Nicole's voice in the next section, I would first like to clarify just *how* this vocal shift grounds itself in the text – where it begins, why it proceeds in this manner. To do so, we must revisit the Dick-focused moments I examined earlier, but this time at a greater perspectival distance, one that takes us out of Rosemary's orbit. The change is subtle: its symptoms all manifest within a few pages of Book I, somewhere between morning on the Tames beach and night at the Villa Diana. When Rosemary first glimpses the occluded social world of the Divers, Norths, and Tommy Barban on Gause's

beach, it seems to her that “there was no life anywhere” but within their closed assemblage of umbrellas (*TN* 11). The Divers maintain this sense of social power and vitality by force of exclusion; Dick’s Victorian nursery preserves its intactness by excluding those who fall outside its rigid and archaic requirements of race, class, and gender. So when two days later Dick declares his (rather mean-spirited) intention to “throw a really *bad* party....to give a party where there’s a brawl and seductions and people going home with feelings hurt and women passed out in the cabinet de toilette” (*TN* 27), his attempt at condescension has the effect of symbolically admitting the barbarians at the gate.

Although Rosemary views the party as a showcase for the Divers at the height of their social power, her adoring narrative viewpoint actually masks Dick’s first, and most significant, moment of social failure. Dick, as an amusement, opens his world to the people who will subvert and replace his rules: The homosexual couple Dumphry and Campion; Rosemary, a next-generation version of Nicole and her mother (a variation on Dick); even the McKiscos, whose nouveau riche philistinism will come to replace Dick’s long-established standards of taste. Things don’t go as planned. Dick gets his “bad party,” just not on the terms he desired: the woman passed out in the cabinet de toilette turns out to be Nicole, and the “brawl” is a duel between Barban and McKisco, which emboldens the latter. Rosemary also makes her first confession of love for Dick, initiating a chain of romantic interactions that will threaten his “balance.” The deeper sources of Dick’s problem are material – the new (American-driven) economy of 1920s Western Europe and social shifts in the wake of World War I – but they manifest as a deluge of minor characters, a tide that Dick cannot stem. And so for the first time, Dr. Diver’s impeccable manners run up against an unreceptive social reality. Every moment of conflict or tension that marks the remainder of the novel stems from the initial shock of this

“qualitative shift” (*TN* 21) in 1925, as Dick and the narrating voice trace out its implications. For Dick, this nascent understanding manifests first as confusion, then anger, and finally resignation; for the narrating voice, it means turning a critical eye on Dick, watching his standards subverted, and then gravitating toward a perspective better attuned to the reconfigured social rhythms of the later 1920s.

III. Nicole’s Early Voice

Having established start of the internal fissure between the narratorial consciousness of *Tender Is the Night* and Dick Diver’s voice, we can now turn safely to the novel’s other central perspective – that of Nicole Diver. Critics have traditionally interpreted her relation to Dick through some variant of the patriarchal lenses I sketched in Section I, with Dick’s role as Victorian atavist and psychotherapist leading him to take the place of Devereux Warren, playing “good father” to the latter’s “bad father” (Godden, “Money” 25). On such an interpretation, Nicole’s letters (121-125) serve merely as diagnostic impetus for Dick’s psychoanalytic treatment of Nicole, which in turn leads to the transference and counter-transference at the center of their marriage. Perhaps as a result, little attention has been paid to the details of Nicole’s first letters to Dick in Book II, which have generally been glossed as markers of an adolescent romantic “fascination” (Burton 462), or as indicators of a “pure innocence” that appeals to Dick’s Victorian sensibilities (Stern, *The Golden Moment* 408).

While Nicole’s letters do, no doubt, channel such romantic fascination and jejune desire, to read them solely through the prism of Dick Diver is to neglect the complexity of Nicole’s earliest appearance in the novel, and its implications for the remainder of the story. More than merely indicating future details of the Diver marriage, the letters reveal aspects of Nicole’s past

and thinking that echo throughout the most significant events of the narrative. Further, attending to the details of Nicole and Dick's epistolary interaction, particularly at the level of language, allows us to re-think the psychoanalytic relationship that develops between the couple, and to do so in such a way that takes account of the novel's complex dynamics of gender and power. In the evolution of Nicole's voice, Fitzgerald draws on the formal experimentalism of the modernist novel to break away from the Freudian narrative of classical psychoanalysis. If the "nursery-like" atmosphere Dick conjures in Book I (and hence his charm for Rosemary) derives partly from his enactment of anachronistic social roles – an enactment in which his Freudian training is implicated - then the gradual emergence of Nicole's voice in Books II-III follows a different path, creating a counter-voice that probes and eventually forces itself through the mythic image of Dick in Book I. And to clarify the role of this counter-voice, I will draw on both Vološinov's theory of language and on the work of Laplanche and Winnicott, two psychoanalytic thinkers whose theories of development re-order the male-dominated oedipal framework of Dick's Freudian training.⁶⁵

When Fitzgerald first presents Dick's reading of Nicole's letters, Dick's treatment of them has every appearance of what psychologist Donald Spence decries as the "narrative tradition" of psychotherapy. Spence writes that the danger of the Freudian model lies in the probability that a well-trained analyst may listen to patient testimony "with a bias toward coherence and continuity," that leads him to neglect interpretations that fall outside the Freudian master-narrative (Spence 24). Accordingly, when Fitzgerald first introduces Nicole's

⁶⁵ Object-Relations Theory as developed by Klein and Winnicott, writes Claire Kahane, "privileges the maternal object as central to the [infant's] developing self" and thus offers "an alternative paradigm to the Freudian Oedipus complex, with its emphasis on the father and castration" (Kahane 284). Although Laplanche comes from a different tradition, his work has deep filiations with Winnicott's views of development, so I feel warranted in deploying the two together (see Scarfone for further parallels).

correspondence, he does so through Dick's focal gaze: Rather than being treated to the unfiltered entirety of their letters, we are instead given three full letters and several fragments of Dick's choosing, culled from "about fifty letters from her written over a period of eight months" (121). Dick frames Nicole's correspondence through two separate optics: First, he classes the "tone" of her letters with "Molly-Make-Believe," Eleanor Hallowell-Abbott's adolescent romance fiction.⁶⁶ And second, Dick divides the excerpted correspondence into two (essentially clinical) categorizations of "entirely normal" and "markedly pathological." Moreover, Fitzgerald presents only one side of the exchange – often detailing Nicole's responses in the absence of the words that prompted them. Whatever the gaps in their correspondence, and despite the monological framing provided by Dick's medical terminology, the Diver-Warren letters do constitute a genuine dialogue; thus, tracking Nicole's responses is also important for understanding Dick. As Vološinov writes, in understanding the speech of another person, we "lay down a set of our own answering words" (*Marxism*, 102). Therefore, reading Nicole's letters may also reveal information about Dick, despite the (univocal) clinical frame in which the correspondence appears.

The first selected letter (a less severe member of the "pathological" grouping) seems chosen solely to validate Dr. Diver's retroactive judgment that "he had pieced together more than Franz would have guessed of the story" (121). Nicole, keeping neatly within the lines of her role as a "hysterical" victim of incest, lashes out at the older Diver with unexpected aggression:

⁶⁶ Following Dick's reference, we would expect Nicole's perspective to mirror that of Rosemary in Book I, who borrows her "tone" from Frances Hodgson-Burnett (31). This allusion would seem to align Nicole's voice with that of Gerty McDowell in the "Nausicaa" chapter of Joyce's *Ulysses*; that Nicole's voice departs so starkly from the treacly excesses of Gerty's vision suggests either that Dick's selection of letters has drastically revised Nicole's tone, or that he misjudges her voice entirely.

You thought I was pretty too but I've had that before and a long time I've stood it. If you come here again with that attitude base and criminal and not even faintly what I had been taught to associate with the rôle of gentleman then heaven help you. (121)

Nicole's unprompted anger fits neatly with the description of her symptoms given some time earlier by her father to Dr. Dohlmer: "She got worse...she had a fit or something – the things she said got crazier and crazier...Almost always about men coming to attack her, men she knew or men on the street – anybody...." (127). On this view, Nicole's words merely displace anger from the incestuous and threatening Devereux Warren onto her new paternal interlocutor, Dick Diver. However, Fitzgerald includes deliberately another page to this missive, extending its scope well beyond the neat therapeutic account given above.

In the lines that follow, Nicole reverses her earlier assault on Dick: "However, you seem quieter than the others, all soft like a big cat." Continuing along this path, Nicole poses a crucial question to Dick, "Are you a sissy?" (121). Nicole's wording touches on an issue of polyvalent significance for Dr. Diver. Most obviously, Dick's status as a non-combatant Army psychiatrist during World War I means that he has a "slight on his masculinity," indicating that Nicole has an accurate (if intuitive) sense of Dick's own sexual anxieties (Joseph 71). The term "sissy" also denotes homosexuality, portending Diver's later association with the "nest" of gay men in Lausanne.⁶⁷ Most centrally, though, Nicole's differentiation between "the others" (men) and Dick (as "sissy") creates a fissure between Dick's role as doctor/analyst and his place as a masculine and paternal figure. Given the associations that Fitzgerald builds between Dick and

⁶⁷ An episode that also includes the sudden appearance of Devereux Warren

maternal figures such as Elsie Speers, this moment has particular importance in suggesting that Dick's role as psychiatrist may also cultivate his maternal aspects.

If the central incident of Dick and Nicole's relationship consists in Nicole's "transference" of affection and neurosis onto Dick, then we might usefully look to an account of transference that distances the defense mechanism of transference itself from the view of the analyst as exclusively masculine or paternal – that of object-relations theorist D.W. Winnicott. Describing his own clinical experience, and writing well after Fitzgerald, Winnicott details one therapeutic situation as follows:

[T]he patient has needed phases of regression to dependence in the transference, these giving the full effect of adaptation to need that is in fact based on the analyst's (mother's) ability to identify with the patient (her baby). [Winnicott 184-5]

In the therapeutic dynamic outlined here, the moment of transference involves a regressive connection in which the analyst takes on a *maternal* role, rather than a paternal one. This notion of the psychoanalytic relation as something potentially maternal, and of Dick Diver as so gendered, will prove central for my analysis of later portions of the novel. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that the voice of Nicole's first letter is more than a mere reflection of her youth, infatuation, or mental illness. That Nicole makes such a prescient observation suggests an intuition and a psychological complexity that extends beyond her initial presentation as a "broken side" of Devereux Warren. Although much of Nicole's later personality and thinking does, indeed, derive from her relationship to Dick, she is no *tabula rasa* prior to their meeting.

To note Nicole's original individuality and intelligence, though, is not to deny that the letters also show the genesis of her romantic relationship with Dick. Franz Gregorovious,

Nicole's first physician at Dohmer's clinic, anticipates such a transference moment, attributing any sexual desire in the correspondence to Dick's personal magnetism: "I want to ask you to go very gently. You're attractive to women, Dick" (131). However, crediting the entirety of the letters' sexual charge (and hence the [Freudian] transference-relation) to Nicole would be a mistake. The currents of desire flow in both directions, though these are often hidden by what the narrative voice⁶⁸ glosses as the "helpless caesuras" of her later letters – suggesting a dyadic understanding that occludes those beyond doctor and patient (123). As a result, the most intriguing lines in the correspondence often require inference, as the presentation of the letters excises all of Dick's originary remarks. At first, Nicole's letters voice a frustration with his reticence: "Since you will not accept my explanation of what is the matter you could at least explain to me what you think" (124). However, as the letters progress, such frustration gives way to an undercurrent of innuendo.

MON CAPITAINE:

It was fine to have your postcard. I am glad you take such interest in disqualifying nurses – oh, I understood your note very well indeed. Only I thought that the moment I met you that you were different. (124)

This moment bears a distant resemblance to the classical Freudian counter-transference in which "the psychiatrist, through weaknesses of his own, actually begins behaving like the desired forbidden parent" (Burton 462).

⁶⁸ Separating the voices in this remark (Dick's from the narrator's) is difficult: Although, as Berman points out, Dick's talents are in many ways literary, the deliberate patterning implied by "caesura" aligns the term more with the narrating perspective, which drives the segmented and non-linear sequencing of this portion of the novel and thus runs against Dick's affinity for the narrative order. This narratorial reading of Nicole as a poem or song is reinforced a few pages later in the phrase "darker rhythms," which continues the musical motif while also hinting at racial anxieties that Dick has yet to register.

Rather than open sexual aggression or attachment on Dick's part, Fitzgerald shows Nicole piecing together sexual suggestion (and an increased understanding of Dick, and adult relationships more generally) latent in statements referring to others. Nicole's process of (partial) decoding and development has a closer analogue in a later work of psychoanalysis, Jean Laplanche's account of the origins of the unconscious:

The...presentations which form the kernel of the unconscious are to be conceived as that which eludes the child's first attempts to construct for itself an interhuman world, and so translate into a more or less coherent view the messages coming from adults. (Laplanche 93)

For Laplanche, a child's initial unconscious development occurs through a partial and fragmentary internalization of the language of the mother (which always carry sexualized meanings), as in the louche references that trickle into Dick's letters. Further, the child's attempts to decode adult language also fail because such communications are also opaque to the adult from which they originate, "compromised by the sender's unconscious" (Laplanche 93). As a result, "the adult-child relation is eminently suited to re-awaken the conflicts and desires coming from the unconscious" (Laplanche 93). Returning focus to the Diver-Warren correspondence, then, we see that the seductive pattern of the exchange follows a subtler path than the counter-transference narrative would admit: In the exchange of letters, we see both Nicole's psychological development (and transference) alongside the awakening of Dick's unconscious desires – all of which plays out at the level of verbal exchange.

And this dialogic exchange of communicative failures and immanent desires plays itself out, as Laplanche's vocabulary helps us to see, in events chronicled by the ensuing letters:

Unable to cope with the unconscious forces channeled by Dick's correspondence, Nicole's voice devolves: she loses "proportion" and ends the communication, calling herself "unstable" (124). Dick, in turn, casts about for a substitute, finding not another patient but "the vivid presence of a Wisconsin telephone girl at headquarters...[s]he was red-lipped like a poster and known obscenely in the messes as 'The Switch-board'" (125). The connotation of sexual desire awakened by his correspondence leads Dick not only to pursue a more adult partner, but also to substitute a newer and more instantaneously gratifying medium ("telephone") for the fragmentary communications offered by Nicole.

The same letter in which Nicole breaks off all communication with Dick occurs at the lowest point of her time in Dohlmer's clinic, immediately before the Armistice of 1918: Dick categorizes it in as one of the "pathological" letters expressing "darker rhythms." However, the phrase "darker rhythms" indicates more than the tenor of Nicole's emotion at this time: It also, in a likely textual pun on Fitzgerald's part, points toward the letter's undertone of racial anxiety. Nicole, at her most psychologically febrile, intercalates cries for help with a reference to song:

DEAR CAPITAINE:

I think one thing today and another tomorrow. That is all that's the matter with me, except a crazy defiance and a lack of proportion. I would gladly welcome any alienist you might suggest. Here they lie in their bath tubs and sing Play in Your Own Backyard as if I had my

(2)

backyard to play in or any hope which I can find by looking either backward or forward.... (124)

Here, Nicole alludes (with a minor error) to the 1899 ballad “Stay in Your Own Backyard” by Karl Kennett and Lynn Udall.⁶⁹ That Nicole often quotes jazz and ragtime lyrics should come as little surprise: Her “seduction” of Dick (shown two chapters later) is mediated partly through her deft use of phonograph records and popular American love songs (135-6). Mark Goble even goes so far as to claim that Dr. Diver falls prey not so much to Nicole’s personal charms as to the ineluctable allure of hearing “black words in a white mouth” (Goble 205). However, Nicole’s choice of song here stands out from the ballads that appear in the later scene: Whereas the Tin Pan Alley love songs that Dick hears were all published between 1917 and 1919 (*Reader’s Companion* 109-110), “Stay in Your Own Backyard” belongs to an earlier period, the 1890s, and an earlier mode of songwriting – what Southern historian James Dormon terms the “Coon Song.”

⁶⁹ Brucoli and Baughman misidentify the reference here as pointing anachronistically to Jolson, Rose, and Deyer’s 1928 song “Back in Your Own Backyard.” However, this is very likely an error, as Jolson’s song makes no reference to playing (unlike Kennett and Udall). Furthermore, Fitzgerald in his *Notebooks* lists “Stay in Your Own Backyard” under the heading “Youth and Army,” alongside a number of other pre-war Tin Pan Alley ballads (*Notebook* 286-7).

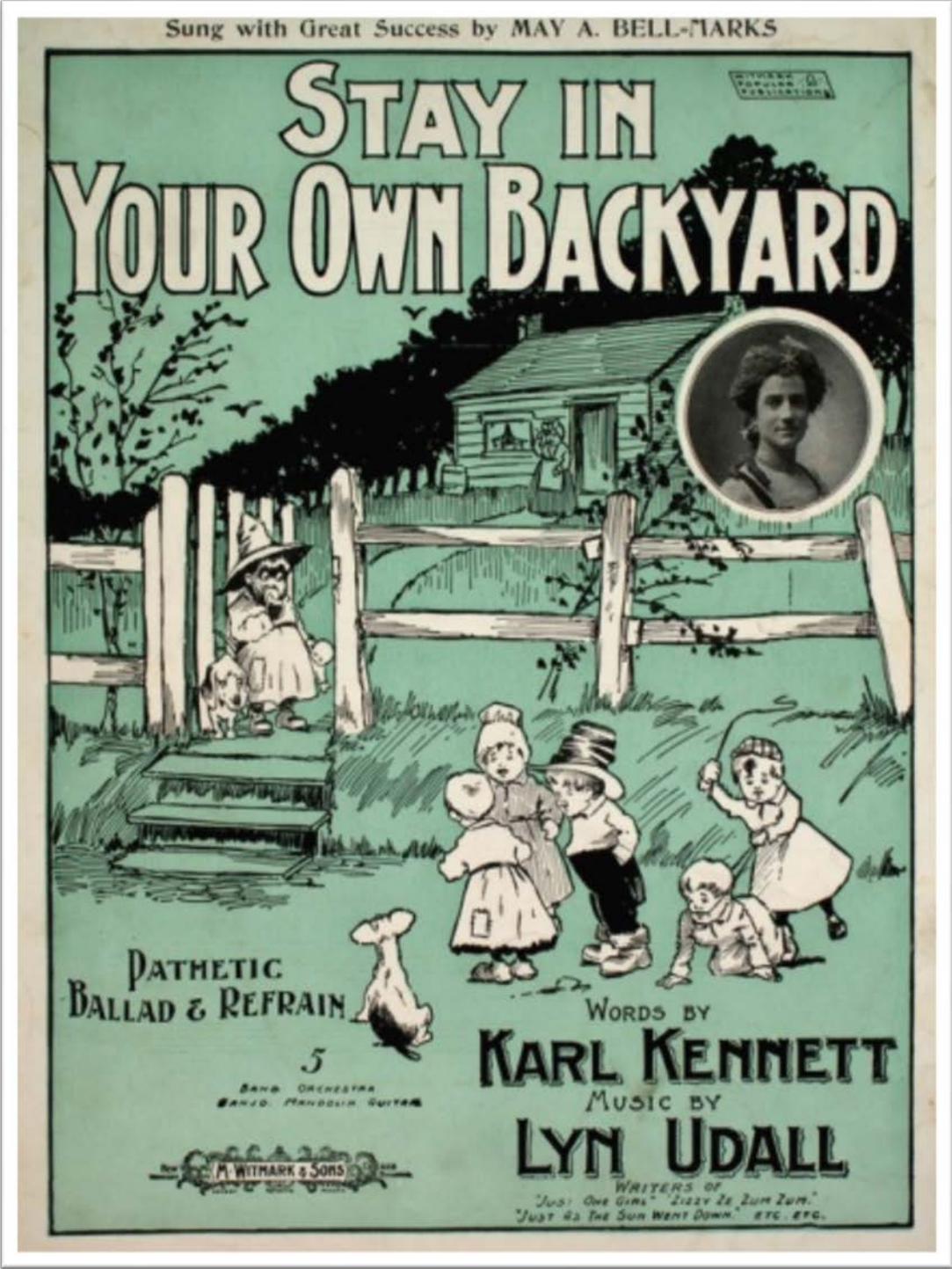


Figure 1: Phonograph Cover of "Stay in Your Own Backyard" (Levy Sheet Music Collection, Johns Hopkins U. Library)

An outgrowth of the earlier Minstrel tradition, the coon songs of the Gilded Age focused on defining a new image of black Americans (the “coon”), distinct from the friendlier, comic figures of minstrel ballads. The songs of this new genre defined “Coons” as “potentially dangerous” forces who threatened whites because of their (blacks’) desires “to be white – to break down the most important barrier of all” (Dormon 455). The overt message of racial separation contained in these songs, then, encourages us to reconsider Nicole’s epistolary allusion. While, Nicole does, as Goble claims, delight in channeling a kind of anachronistic blackness,⁷⁰ in appropriating black culture and voices for recreation, the segregationist message of “Stay in Your Own Backyard” precludes such a playful appropriation. In the first verse, Kennett presents the protagonist’s ordeal:

Curly headed pickaninny comin’ home so late
Cryin’ cause his little heart is sore;
All the children playin’ round
Have skin so white and fair,
None of them with him will ever play,
So Mammy in her lap takes her little weeping chap,
And says in her own kind way:

However, the maternal advice that follows, given to the “pickaninny,” reinforces the segregationist rhetoric at the heart of all “coon” songs:

Now honey, yo’ stay in yo’ own back yard,
Doan’ mind what dem white chiles do;
What sho yo’ suppose dey’s gwine to gib

⁷⁰ Much like Fitzgerald’s other Jazz-loving characters in *Gatsby* and *The Beautiful and Damned*

A black little coon like yo’?
So stay on dis side of de high boad fence,
And honey doan’ cry so hard;
Go out an’ a-play jes as much as yo’ please,
But stay in yo’ own back yard. (Kennett & Udall)

Nicole, in the letter that cites this song, aligns herself with the protagonist of the Kennett and Udall ballad (“as if I had my backyard to play in” [124]), indicating a sense of isolation from those around her. The later verses of the song build on this sense to a more ominous message about the consequences of such isolation: the “lonesome” protagonist, after “wistful[ly]” watching the white children “comin’ home from school,” ends the song by dying before he reaches adulthood: “[g]od had called this dusky little elf” (Kennett and Udall). The macabre content of the last verse, along with Nicole’s deteriorating mental state, may help to explain why she invokes so dated a piece of popular song.

Although she enjoys appropriating black culture to amuse herself and her friends, the threat of actually *being* black – of being touched or stained by it – tends to provoke or signal Nicole’s worst moments of psychological collapse. The birth of her daughter Topsy induces a moment of almost “psychotic breakdown” (Burton 469): “everything got dark again... You tell me my baby is black – that’s farcical, that’s very cheap” (161). More obviously, Fitzgerald presents an adult Nicole at her lowest, most unstable point when she witnesses the death of another diminutive black character – the Swedish shoemaker Jules Peterson – in the Paris hotel of Book I. When an inattentive Dick, focused on keeping the “smear” of Peterson’s death “off Rosemary,” hands the blood-soaked sheets to Nicole, he triggers in her a flashback, one whose consequences Fitzgerald renders in terms of voice: “And now Rosemary, too, could hear, louder and louder, a verbal inhumanity that penetrated the keyholes and cracks in the doors, swept into

the suite and in the shape of horror took form again” (110-112). Echoing the death of the “dusky little elf” in Kennett’s lyrics, the death of Jules Peterson frightens Nicole not because of its association with black skin, but because of the blood that threatens to “smear” – recalling the coon songs’ feverish protection of the “most important barrier of all” (Dormon 455). To recap, then, Nicole’s momentary allusion to a pre-war ballad reveals her implication in a network of almost antebellum race and class associations, one that recalls the “stable and predictable society” evoked by Dick on the Tarnes beach at the novel’s opening (Stern, “Tender” 6).

My treatment of this single allusion may already border on the obsessive, but it would be a mistake to proceed without tracing the letter back to its primary source – the letters of Zelda Fitzgerald to her husband. Doing so will help to unearth another aspect of the voice present in Nicole’s most “pathological” letter. That Fitzgerald cannibalized parts of his own life and his wife’s correspondence as material for the novel has been well documented (Brucoli, *Some Sort* 344-5). In this case, though, the real-life source of Nicole’s letter carries a further hermeneutic payoff. While under the care of Oscar Forel at the Prangins clinic in 1930, Zelda wrote regular letters to Scott. The missive in which the following appears stands as one of her most depressive and accusatory:

When you saw in Paris that I was sick, sinking – when you knew that I went for days without eating, incapable of supporting contact with even the servants – you sat in the bathroom and sang “Play in your own Backyard.” Unfortunately, there wasn’t any yard: it was a public play-ground, apparently. You introduced me to Nancy Hoyt and sat me beside Dolly Wilde one moment and the next disparaged and belittled the few friends I knew whose eyes had gathered their softness at least from things I understood. Some justification has always been imperative to me, and I could never function simply from

the necessity for functioning not even to save myself as the King of Greece once told Ernest Hemmingway was the most important thing of all as you so illuminatingly told me. (Bryer and Barks 87)

Beyond the previously noted racial associations of the Kennett and Udall song, the most salient allusions in the letter – the central sources of anxiety – deal with homosexuality. As Bryer and Barks note, the Dolly Wilde referred to above was the niece of Oscar, a middle-aged socialite who made sexual advances toward Zelda, “which infuriated Scott” (Bryer and Barks 87fn.4). Moreover, the mention of Hemingway would have had particular resonance when placed alongside the name of Dolly Wilde, since Zelda frequently during this time period accused her husband of having homosexual desires, especially toward his fellow novelist and friend (Brucoli, *Some Sort* 244-5). If Nicole’s final “pathological” letter lacks an overt connection to the undercurrent of homosexual anxiety that echoes through Zelda Fitzgerald’s original letter, noting Zelda’s original set of associations helps to explain the persistent shadow of homosexuality that follows split-gendered Dick throughout the novel – Nicole’s earlier identification of him as a “sissy,” the presence of Campion and Dumphy at the Divers’ “bad party” of Book I, and the “nest” of gay men that Dick encounters during his final visit to Lausanne in Book III.

To recap, we have seen that Nicole’s earliest letters to Dick, her first appearance in the *fabula*⁷¹ of *Tender Is the Night*, demonstrate more than simply incoherent hysteria or adolescent fascination. Nicole, perhaps owing to her intertextual links to the novelist’s wife, demonstrates a powerful intuition and perspective of her own – both pointing out areas of insecurity for Dr.

⁷¹ “The set of narrated situations and events in their chronological sequence; the basic story material (as opposed to plot or *sjuzet*) in Russian Formalist terminology” (Prince 29-30).

Diver and readily detecting his allusions. Further, while the correspondence does trigger a transference-relation, it takes place through an oblique route – radiating out of Dick’s indirect speech and Nicole’s efforts to grasp its meaning. Most centrally, though, Nicole’s epistolary allusions link her to a stable pre-war world, even to antebellum values that mirror those of her interlocutor, who in turn derives his manners and sense of propriety from his Virginian father, a “Southerner” who came “north just after the Civil War” (164). As a result, for all the complexity that the correspondence reveals about Nicole, her letters to Dick remain firmly anchored in his voice, arranged according to his perspective, inflected by his words. Nicole does, eventually, emerge with a voice more distinctly her own, but the path to that narrative independence, as I will demonstrate, involves a deeper fusion with Dick.

IV. “[M]y business is to hold things together”

As I argued earlier, Fitzgerald at the opening of Book I shows Dick as perceived through the Rosemary Hoyt’s idealizing and naïve purview, according to which he resembles the paternalistic narratorial figure of an earlier age: “that *paterfamilias*...both omniscient and omnipotent, knowing all, telling all, controlling all” – a picture that is only reinforced by Dick’s choice of profession (Levitt 20). However, to read Dr. Diver in exclusively masculine terms would be to neglect Fitzgerald’s insistent contrapuntal moves: Though Dick may appear purely paternal at the opening of Book I, as Nicole’s early marking of Dick as a “sissy” suggests, the novel contains an equally consistent network of images and associations linking him to maternal caretaking. Early in Book I, Rosemary anticipates Dick’s behavior because “his laws are like the laws mother taught [her]” (37). Naïve though her early vision may be, Rosemary recognizes accurately a correspondence between Dick’s “beautiful manners” and Mrs. Speers’ “compact social gift.” Fitzgerald notes on several occasions that Dick’s social graces trace back to his

father: “Dick loved his father – again and again he referred judgments to what his father would have said or done” (203). However, even the masculine codes of the Reverend Diver, “the kind of manners he inherited from the days when you shot first and apologized afterward” (178), stem from a distinctly maternal source. The narratorial voice notes in the burial scene that the elder Diver had derived his own manners “the two proud widows who raised him” (204). Noting this doubly feminine lineage explains why Dr. Diver, even at his “very acme of bachelorhood” (115) during the war, remains weighed down by the illusions of “frontier mothers who had to coo that there were no wolves outside the cabin door” (117) – Dick’s masculine lineage stems from a doubly feminine source.

I have belabored Dick’s early maternal associations because of their centrality in his doubly gendered relationship with Nicole, which is so often interpreted solely through the masculine roles of psychiatrist and husband. Beyond these specifically paternal offices, Dick serves as Nicole’s caretaker, a role which Fitzgerald renders through a network of feminine associations. When, in the Gare du Nord, Nicole states that a woman’s “business is to hold things together,” the faintly ironic note emerges because of Dick’s conspicuous failure to serve his usual (womanly) function (82). By contrast, years earlier (in the first stages of their relationship and her “recovery”), Dick tries to shield Nicole from the impression “that he had stitched her together” (137). The “stich[es]” here recall the novel’s opening image of British Nannies, “knitting the slow pattern of Victorian England,” (2), and the circuit between knitting and maternity inflects the descriptions surrounding Dick’s relationship to Nicole, and eventually to Rosemary. When, later Nicole experiences a psychotic break at the Agiri fair, Dick watches her run, “an ochre stitch along the edge of reality and unreality” (188-9). If Dick assays to fill the role of the Victorian narrator (per Levitt’s definition) as “controlling all,” then his efforts are

mediated by a distinctly feminine set of tropes – struggling to “hold together” the old, slow patterns of the past.

While Fitzgerald utilizes knitting-imagery to intimate the feminization of his “toymaker” protagonist, he also encodes a set of associations that position Dick as a fictive mirror-image of Rosemary’s mother – Elsie Speers. Both parental figures exude a “full charm” (165), implying both a personal magnetism and an antique code of manners, one that Rosemary recognizes intuitively at the Villa Diana dinner party in Book I: “his laws [are] like the laws mother taught” (37). More importantly, it is Elsie who imparts to Rosemary the “cultivated...idealism” that renders the young actress so susceptible to the Divers and their entourage: When Rosemary has her “dewy” glimpse of the Book I dining table she does so “through [Elsie’s] eyes” (13). This ideological alignment between Dick and Elsie begs further reading. While Dick’s relation to Rosemary is widely noted as having a parental quality, critical opinion has tended to align Dr. Diver with the novel’s other deficient father-figure, Devereux Warren. Catherine Cummings, for example, refers to Dick and Rosemary’s interlude as “a repetition...of Devereux’s daughter’s seduction” (Cummings 233). Susann Cokal, focusing on Nicole, renders the Warren parallel more explicit: “By acceding to Nicole’s love, Dick pathologizes himself metaphorically and irrevocably, as an incestuous father” (Cokal 89). Fitzgerald’s deliberate associations between Dick and Elsie, however, suggest an alternative reading of Dick’s relationships to both Rosemary and Nicole: It is no accident that Rosemary views the Divers’ marital affection as “like the love of herself and her mother” (75). To read the familial dynamics of Dick and Nicole’s relationship – as both marriage and analytic situation - will require that we look beyond the father.

In his initial role as Nicole’s psychoanalyst, Dick – as Fitzgerald notes repeatedly – does engender a “transference” in his patient; but the situation’s altered gender-dynamics mean that

Dick and Nicole's transference-love departs from the classical analytic pattern. In a standard transference involving a hysteric, as Freud describes in "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through," rather than *remember* a repressed experience (Devereux Warren's seduction), a patient will "reproduce it not as memory but as action...[s]he *repeats it*" with the analyst in place of the seducing parent (Freud 150). When an analyst instead counter-transfers, reciprocating the "repeating" patient's sexual advances, he thereby engages in his own act of repetition – acting and recapitulating the role of the offending parent.⁷² Pamela Boker enlarges on the dangers of the short-circuited transference between Dick and Nicole: "when transference love is not translated into self-knowledge, both the doctor and the patient are forced into a continuous and unrelenting role-playing situation: the patient forever repressing symptoms to earn love, and the doctor upholding the image of protector and ideal" (Boker 302).

Convincing though it may be, this argument takes us only so far. The reading of Dick as repeating Devereux Warren's fatherly seduction – advanced by Boker, Cummings, and Cokal – although accurate, tells an incomplete story. Fitzgerald's repeated emphasis on the Diver marriage as a "transference" (120), if considered alongside the parallel set of maternal associations outlined above, points in another direction. A clue as to this alternate reading of the transference can be found in the mode of collective address that the Divers employ "in the first days of love" – "Dicole" (103). More than an "inappropriate" linguistic fusion (Cokal 90), this mutual nominalization suggests how psychologically inter-permeable Dick and Nicole's identities have become. And with this pronominal fusion in mind, we can again take up Winnicott's argument:

⁷² Such intense transferences are "particularly prominent in borderline patients and in those with histories of incest" (Gabbard 172).

In this case, and in similar cases, I have found that the patient has needed phases of regression to dependence in the transference, these giving experience of the full adaptation to need that is in fact based on the analyst's (mother's) ability to identify with the patient (her baby). In the course of this kind of *experience* there is a...quantity of being merged in with the analyst (mother). [*Playing and Reality* 185]

To grasp the full import of Winnicott's remark, we must turn to an earlier essay on a slightly different topic, "The Mirror-Role of Mother and Family in Child Development."

According to Winnicott, at this point in the analysis, the regression effected by therapeutic transference involves returning the patient to a much earlier stage of development, one at which "there is no 'I' to actually experience subjectively" (Scarfone 40). Lacking a fully formed subjectivity, the infant (or patient) will thus see itself as continuous with the external "environment" (world of objects) which is "not yet separated off from the infant" (Winnicott 150).⁷³ Instead, a normally functioning infant in this stage will have the "legitimate experience of omnipotence" – sensing that the objects it encounters are "subjective object[s]...created by the baby" (Winnicott 150). At the center of this "subjective-objective" environment stands the mother, or caretaker, whose role – at least initially – is as mirror, to reflect the infant's feelings back to it: "What does the baby see when he or she looks at the mother's face? I am suggesting that, ordinarily, what the baby sees is himself or herself. In other words the mother is looking at the baby and *what she looks like is related to what she sees there*" (Winnicott 151). The surrounding environment (the caretaker) appears continuous with the infant's thoughts and desires.⁷⁴ If this account of regression and the mother-analyst's role as mirror seem abstract or

⁷⁴ "The infant's illusion of omnipotence emerges as a result of the mother's capacity to adapt to his needs. This occurs cumulatively at the very beginning and lays the foundations for the infant's subsequent healthy emotional

distant from the concrete lives of Dick and Nicole Diver, consider this moment from their early courtship:

He was older enough than Nicole to take pleasure in her youthful vanities and delights, the way she paused fractionally in front of the hall mirror on leaving the restaurant, so that the incorruptible quicksilver could give her back to herself. He delighted in her stretching out her hands to new octaves now that she found herself beautiful and rich. He tried honestly to divorce her from any obsession that he had stitched her together – glad to see her build up happiness and confidence apart from him.... (TN 137).

Dick's "pleasure" at first derives from (and reflects) Nicole's youthful "delights." As the scene progresses, maternal associations proliferate, however subtly. Nicole's seeing her own in an "incorruptible" mirror that "[gives] her back to herself" recalls Rosemary's idealized vision of Dick's talents in Book I: "It was themselves he gave back to them" (52). Most saliently, Dr. Diver's functions as mother, husband, and analyst overlap in the feminized metaphorization of psychotherapy as "stitch[ing]...together," a figural connective which is counterbalanced by the subtly proleptic suggestion that even so tacit a stitching will lead to "divorce." Dick's plural functions in Nicole's life – as mirror, as mother, as doctor, as lover – all surface in this fleeting moment, as Dick struggles to keep his distance.

V. Nicole's Monologue

The infantile proto-subjectivity established between infant and caretaker (Nicole and Dick) can further be brought to bear on one of the novel's most enigmatic sections, one that

development. Thus a healthy sense of self emerges out of the newborn infant's illusion of having created the object through his need, and this makes him feel all-powerful, but without being aware of the need for power: things are simply as they should be" (Abram 200).

follows the emergence of Nicole as first-person narrator – her extended monologue in Book II. The monologue, which constitutes the bulk of Chapter X of Book II and provides a temporal bridge linking the first two books, reveals a psychologically stronger Nicole displaying every hallmark of health and autonomy. In the words of one critic, the emergence of Nicole’s voice here constitutes “a blatant challenge to Dick’s narrative watchwords of order and control” (Rattray 94). Beyond shifting from external to first-person narration, the monologue opens in a thematic space that Dick “refuses to have anything to do with” – the Warren family fortune, as Nicole negotiates financial transactions with both her sister and attorney, ensuing that her “share will pile up” (159). Because of this rapid shift in viewpoint and theme, Dimock sees this section as wresting the “narrative agency from Dick” and “depositing it solely on Nicole’s side,” as both demonstration of Nicole’s business acumen and foreshadowing of the control she will wield later in the text (Dimock). Yet as the preceding discussion of the transference suggests, to read Nicole’s thoughts at this stage is to encounter more than one set of motives or intentions, more than one originating voice.

That Nicole’s voice retains its earlier frangibility becomes clear if we examine her at her most assertive. Recounting their honeymoon boat journey shortly after Topsy’s birth, she begins with a playful description of the Divers’ charm (recalling Rosemary’s view of them in Book I), but then swerves abruptly:

Life is fun with Dick – the people in deck chairs look at us, and a woman is trying to hear what we are singing. Dick is tired of singing it, so go on alone, Dick. You will walk differently alone, dear, through a thicker atmosphere, forcing your way through the shadows of chairs, through the dripping smoke of the funnels. You will feel your own

reflection sliding along the eyes of those who look at you. You are no longer insulated;
but I suppose you must touch life in order to spring from it. (160)

From a casual, collectively focalized sense of levity (the singing “us”), Nicole makes abrupt shifts in tense (future) and modality (“will”), assuming a tone of commanding formality absent from the rest of her writing. This tonal aberration, in turn, suggests the presence of another perspective, the sense that Nicole’s thoughts here may be colored by another’s accent. The passage’s emphasis on vision provides a hint as to whose: the emphasis on mirroring recalls the man who “gives [others] back to themselves,” and the phrase “reflection sliding along the eyes of those you look at you” echoes the narrator’s focalized description of Dick’s feelings at the moment of his and Nicole’s first kiss: “he was thankful to have an existence at all, if only as a reflection in her wet eyes” (155). Here, Nicole voices a thought that Dick has never verbalized, taking it instead from the language of the narrator himself. If the narrator’s critical tone in Book I stemmed from a negative source within Dick itself, in Book II Nicole has absorbed that “second voice” – mirroring aspects of Dick’s own divided thinking back to him.⁷⁵ That Nicole ends with the suggestion of diving (“spring”) is particularly ominous, hinting at the figurative suggestion in Dick’s last name, a “dying fall” that borders on the suicidal.⁷⁶ However commanding a tone she may assume, Nicole’s thoughts remain bounded within a semantic space delimited by Dick’s thinking and language.

⁷⁵See Vološinov’s remark on free indirect discourse: Of FID, he writes, “we recognize another person’s utterance not so much in terms of its message, abstractly considered, but above all in terms of the reported character’s accentuation and intonation, in terms of the evaluative orientation of his speech” (*Marxism* 155). The speaking voice may come from Nicole, but the words – and the undertone of self-hatred – emanate from Dick himself, his own “darker rhythms.”

⁷⁶ In a letter to H.L. Mencken, Fitzgerald writes that Dick’s decline was “absolutely deliberate” and came from “a definite plan” (a self-destructive choice) rather than a listless decline (qtd. in Brucoli, *Some* 367).

Having identified the presence of Dick's voice *inside* Nicole's, we can now reconsider the psychological stability that she displays in the early years of her marriage. Although her speech refrains from the jagged, febrile digressions of her letters to Dick during the war, this stability has come at a cost, one that she readily acknowledges:

When Mary and I talk neither of us listens to the other. Talk is men. When I talk I say to myself that I am probably Dick. Already I have been my son, remembering how wise and slow he is. Sometimes I am Doctor Dohlmer, and one time I may even be an aspect of you, Tommy Barban....(162)

Nicole's remarks here are striking in their nonchalance: The regression that undergirds her relationship with Dick means that she has surrendered her voice ("[t]alk") to men. Significant, too, are the other men she mentions: Dohlmer, who served the place-holder role of analyst/father in the period between Devereux Warren and Dr. Diver; and Tommy Barban, who will eventually take Dick's place. Her son, Lanier, though, seems out of place, as does the description of a seven year-old as "wise." At the level of form, Nicole draws an equivalence between the voice of a child (Lanier) and those of the dominant male figures in her life. This equation suggests the "unintegrated state" of Nicole's self-concept (Winnicott, *Playing* 82): Lacking a determinate viewpoint of her own, she absorbs each of these voices passively, receiving each as part of an undifferentiated stream.

Although the primary framing for my reading of Nicole comes from Winnicott's theory of object-relation and ego-formation, it is Bakhtin who describes it best. Reflecting in his final notebooks near the end of his life, he describes the relationship between adult voices and the formation of the infantile self:

Everything that pertains to me enters my consciousness, beginning with my name, from the external world through the mouths of others (my mother, and so forth), with their intonation, in their emotional and value-assigning tonality. I realize myself initially through others: from them I receive words, forms, and tonalities for the formation of my initial idea of myself....Just as the body is formed initially in the mother's womb (body), a person's consciousness awakens trapped in another's consciousness. Only later does one begin to be subsumed by neutral words and categories, that is, one is defined as a person irrespective of *I* and *other*. (Bakhtin, *Speech Genres* 138)

Bakhtin's description - though general in its focus - can help to explain Nicole's particular experience of others' words. In alternating between the identities (thought-patterns) of the men in her life ("sometimes I am Dr. Dohlmer"), Nicole attempts to "realize [herself] through others." Nicole has escaped the darkness and instability she displayed at Dohlmer's clinic in Zurich, but only at the cost of her sense of herself as an independent entity: at this stage in the regression, "there is no 'I' to actually experience subjectively" (Scarfone 41). In Winnicott's terms, she has "not yet separated out 'not-me' from 'me'" ("Fear of Breakdown"). It comes as little surprise, then, that she later reflects on this period of her life by thinking that "she had not existed for a long time"; in psychoanalytic terms - she's quite literally right (*TN* 276).

However, this is not to suggest that Nicole's appropriation of language remains totally passive. The later portions of the monologue show the emergence of a subtler narrative agency. Near the end of Chapter x, Nicole tells Dick "'You've taught me that work is everything and I believe you. You used to say that a man knows things and when he stops knowing things he's like anyone else'" (161-2) However, Nicole's appropriation of Dr. Diver's voice takes on a new dimension when she rebukes her husband for failing to follow his own rules, "If you want to turn

things topsy-turvy, all right, but must your Nicole follow you walking on her hands, darling?” (162). Although the opening chapters of Book I have already established the Divers as one of Palmer’s small intermental units, here Fitzgerald explores the inner dynamics of that unit from an alternate perspective. She may rely on Dick’s vocabulary, but Nicole’s borrowings are not without resistance. Bakhtin can help us to see why: “When one’s personal ‘final’ word does not exist, then every creative plan, every thought, feeling and experience must be refracted through the medium of another person’s word, style, and manner, with which it is impossible to merge without reservation, distance, and refraction” (Bakhtin, *Problems* 167). Nicole’s nascent capacity to resist, to repurpose Dick’s “words, forms, and tonalities,” signals the emergence of an incipient sense of self – the beginning of her psychic weaning.⁷⁷

VI. Breaking “Dicole”

Though the novel continues for several chapters afterwards, its true ending – the inflection point at which Dick’s voice surrenders narrative agency to Nicole’s – occurs near the center of Book III. On its surface, the episode has every appearance of domestic triviality: the morning after Dick’s embarrassing episode on T.F. Golding’s yacht, Nicole defies her husband’s orders by giving the family’s jar of camphor rub to Tommy Barban. What might be taken for an act of everyday petulance on Nicole’s part instead destabilizes the long-standing balance of the Diver family – a shift that Nicole senses with anxiety:

He nodded and continued to lie quiescent, staring at the ceiling. Doubtfully she went to give the order. Upstairs again she looked into his room – the blue eyes, like searchlights,

⁷⁷ As Brucoli has amply documented, the ambivalence of Nicole’s feelings for Dick, her simultaneous desire to imitate and destroy, emanates even more intensely in the early drafts of the monologue: “I adore him and I must show/ <conquer> him I am worth something, as good as he is. He says I must not go to extremes but/” (*The Composition* 115).

played on a dark sky. She stood a minute in the doorway, aware of the sin she had committed against him, half afraid to come in....She put out her hand as if to rub his head, but he turned away like a suspicious animal. Nicole could stand the situation no longer; in a kitchen-maid's panic she ran downstairs, afraid of what the stricken man above would feed on while she must continue her dry suckling at his lean chest. (TN 279)

That Fitzgerald presents the Diver marriage in the language of infantile nurturing should come as no surprise; that Nicole does the same, should. Despite the narrator's consistent rendering of Dick in a maternal vocabulary (the aforementioned parallels with Elsie Speers and Nicole's deceased mother),⁷⁸ Nicole (when serving as focal character) neglects to acknowledge the explicitly parental nature of their relationship until this moment. The explicit mention of breasts – “suckling” and “feed[ing]” – along with the implied need for more (“must continue”) has particular resonance for object-relations framework described above. And this resonance points to another pathway into the “Dicole” intersubjectivity: Understanding why so trivial a moment constitutes the central transitional point of *Tender Is the Night*'s will mean looking further into breast-feeding.

In “The use of An Object and Relation through Identifications,” Winnicott explains such mother-child severance by way of a clinical analogy:

In clinical terms: two babies are feeding at the breast. One is feeding on the self, since the breast and the baby have not yet become (for the baby) separate phenomena. The other is feeding from an other-than-me source, or an object that can be given cavalier treatment without effect on the baby unless it retaliates. Mothers, like analysts, can be good or not

⁷⁸ In Book III, Nicole chaperones her faltering husband around Europe using the skills she acquired “as a child when travelling with her failing mother” (258).

good enough; some can and some cannot carry the baby over from relating to usage (Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* 119).

For Winnicott, the distinction between “relating” to an object and “using” it lies in the infant’s (or patient’s) attempt at destruction of the object. In the first phases of the infant’s encounter with the breast, “there is a relation centered on self-preservation, the satisfaction of a major adaptive need,” as the infant internalizes both the nutritive content of the breast’s milk and the “enigmatic” adult messages associated with it (Laplanche 128). The infant sees the breast as an aspect of itself – but only temporarily.

When the infant encounters its first resistance, the first sense that the environment it has taken for granted may not act according to its wishes, it attempts to “destroy” the offending environmental feature. Significantly, this initial attempt at destruction typically involves the *breast*:

[A]t whatever age a baby begins to allow the breast external position (outside the area of projection), then...the destruction of the breast has become a feature....It is an important part of what a mother does, to be the first person to take the baby through this first version of many that will be encountered, of the attack that is survived (*Playing and Reality* 124).

If the earliest stages of the child’s development establish continuity between the child’s subjectivity and that of its “environment” (in Winnicott’s rather specific sense of the term), then the mother’s breast serves as the site of the infant’s subjective separation from that environment. The infant’s attempt to destroy the breast results in the creation of the “first not-me object,” and – more importantly – the concomitant emergence of a subjective ‘I’ against which the object may

be recognized. The infant now realizes itself as an individual entity – Nicole as separate from Dick. Moreover, this marks the first moment in which Nicole recognizes Dick as an independent being – in need of nourishment from others. This moment has both social and psychic implications for the Divers, and I will outline both.

Fitzgerald's choice of "suckling" to describe Nicole's gradual shift away from her husband is no accident. Beyond the myriad maternal associations that surround Dick, the figure of the breast – particularly the maternal breast- has a recurrent presence in Fitzgerald's oeuvre. The earliest salient mention comes in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," where the "somber and inexplicable" men of deserted Fish, Montana "[suck] a lean milk from the almost literally bare rock" ("Diamond" 7). "Abandoned by nature," and devoid of "the vital quality of illusion which would make them wonder or speculate," the "anaemic" denizens of Fish derive only a material subsistence – bare life – from the metaphorical breast of the land around them. Later, in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald expands the metaphorical register of the breast image. Nick imagines Gatsby's first romantic encounter with Daisy through the symbolic lens of nursing:

Out of the corner of his eye Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalks really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees – he could climb to it, if he climbed alone, and once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder. (*Gatsby* 110)

For Jay Gatsby, who – unlike the men of Fish – possesses an unrivaled "capacity for wonder," (*Gatsby* 180) the figure of the maternal breast accumulates associations, becoming a vector for both material and social aspirations. Fitzgerald takes care, too, to link these aspirations back to language: Reflecting on Gatsby's "milk of wonder" story, Nick – although inclined to dismiss

the episode for its “appalling sentimentality” – finds himself drawn into it bodily: “I was reminded of something...For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man’s, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air” (*Gatsby* 111). To follow the logic of Fitzgerald’s images: Gatsby’s sentimentalized figure of the breast thus conjures an oral response from Nick, who moves his lips in response to a forgotten phrase; the symbolic force of the breast-image (milk) thus translates into concrete utterances, which become lactatable, transitive.

At other moments, however, breast-images in Fitzgerald’s pre-*Tender* materials also evolve to carry darker associations. In *The World’s Fair*, an early draft of *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald includes the character of Wanda Breasted, object of Francis Melarky’s desire. A “special red and white type,”⁷⁹ who is “lousy with money,” debutante Wanda would appear to embody the sentimental social possibility that Gatsby saw in Daisy, embodied in the “pap of life” above her window: physical beauty, Victorian innocence, and the promise of wealth united in the symbol of “an America of dreams, a continent fully responsive to the twin promises of beauty and success” (Callahan 81). Melarky even thinks of the pressure of Wanda’s hand as a “promise” (572, 577). There is no milk of wonder to be found here, though. In place of the “hereditary” distinction the narrator appears to grant to Wanda for being “a tall rich American girl...in her insouciant promenade along the steel girder of [American] prosperity,” Francis finds “sordidness” (577). Wanda is revealed to be an “hysterical lesbian”: Melarky spends the night in her room, but she repels his attempts at seduction, threatening suicide all the while (577). In the

⁷⁹ It’s worth noting here that, of the characters in the finished novel, Wanda most closely resembles Dick himself. Here’s why: As Cummings notes, the Melarky episode that Fitzgerald “stripped” for use in *Tender* primarily attach to Rosemary who even recites “many of [Melarky’s] lines” (Cummings 246). Where Melarky becomes Rosemary, Wanda becomes Dick: Both are distinguished by their “red” coloring, and Wanda’s homosexual leanings track the novel’s gradual characterization of Dick as ‘pervert,’ surrounded by homosexual associations (Cummings 248).

character of Wanda Breasted, Fitzgerald thus inverts the associations his earlier work accumulated around the figure of the breast. For Francis, Wanda at first suggests the social and economic possibilities Gatsby envisions after kissing Daisy. But this is at most a façade. Beneath the outward physical attraction and accoutrements of “national prosperity,” Wanda’s illicit sexual desires and suicidal impulses suggest that the tokens of American sentimentalism, a personal and national dream embodied by Wanda and Dick, have lost their purchase on reality.

With Wanda Breasted’s subversion of the breast’s symbolic potential now laid out, we can turn back to *The Great Gatsby*. At the novel’s end, Fitzgerald includes a moment that echoes the “pap of life” glimpsed earlier, this time with revisionary intent. As Nick looks out from West Egg, he reflects: “

...gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes – a fresh green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby’s house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (*Gatsby* 180)

The flowering island, with its “fresh green breast,” seems to offer recompense to a human desire distinctly generative for the American character – a “milk of wonder” to match that “capacity for wonder” that drove its earliest European settlers. Fitzgerald’s maternal image thus serves as a signifier of a particular vision of America as a land offering itself up to desires mercantile and national. Yet the maternal connotations take us only so far: the choice of “pander” betokens a

kind of prostitution – less national aspiration than its “spectre.”⁸⁰ For Breitwieser, the pandering trees address themselves to a distinctly American variety of desire – “an absence at the core, a vacancy that precedes the *phantasms* that address themselves to that vacancy – mystic nationhood, voices full of money, and fresh green breasts” (Breitwieser 376).

Following the negative arc of these “phantasm[ic]” symbols leads us back to a description of the young Dr. Diver, at the very “acme of bachelorhood”: “Dick got up to Zurich on less Achilles’ heels than would be required to equip a centipede, but with plenty – the illusions of eternal strength and health, and of the essential goodness of people; illusions of a nation, the lies of generations of frontier mothers who had to croon falsely, that there were no wolves outside the cabin door” (TN 117). The links are subtle: Fitzgerald’s punctuation stands out for its uncharacteristic break in parallel structure – a misplaced comma severing noun phrase “lies of...” from adjective clause “that there were.” The deliberate separation of “croon falsely” from its complement tilts emphasis to the verb phrase itself – false croonings to match the pandering whispers of trees on Gatsby’s Long Island. The phrasal echo of Dick’s “frontier mothers” after Gatsby’s whispering trees implies an ideational lineage: the greatest dreams of the seventeenth century are agnate to the “illusions of a nation” on which the young Diver is nourished in the late nineteenth.⁸¹ To trace the paternal line though another generation: in Book III, an etiolated Dick finds himself bereft of these illusions, and thus worrying over his legacy to them: “The day before Doctor Diver left the Riviera he spent all his time with his children. He was not young any more with a lot of nice thoughts and dreams to have about himself, so he

⁸⁰ Cf. Fitzgerald’s journal entry describing his first encounter with a prostitute: “and that night was the first time that I hunted down the spectre of womanhood” (Brucoli, *Some Sort* 57).

⁸¹ Fitzgerald renders this linkage transparently direct: To bury his father (the source of his illusions and product of “two proud widows”), Dick returns to Virginia, where he recognizes his ancestors, “souls made of new earth in the forest-heavy darkness of the seventeenth century” (TN 205).

wanted to remember them well...he had been uneasy about what he had to give the ever-climbing, ever-clinging, *breast-searching young*" [my italics] (*TN* 311). Here, then, Fitzgerald closes the figurative circuit that opened with Nicole's anxieties over suckling: The symbolic breast has evolved, from object of monetary and social desire, to figure of national ideal, and finally, to the reverberating moral absence at the center of Dick's desiccated character.

I have traced this progression of the breast-images not as a means of showing the breast's centrality in Fitzgerald's milieu, but rather to indicate how its metaphorical alterations track the repositioning of Dick's character in a deep-structural sense. If Dick, with his early "illusions" began the text in the active, male position of Nick Carraway's Dutch sailor, then the analogical space delimited by these breast images moves him, gradually, into the passive feminine position (from sailor to "fresh green breast" or even "frontier mother"). The gender-realignment ramifies into every aspect of Dick's life. No longer the all-knowing Victorian father (his social gifts no longer function) or Freudian analyst (Dick has by this point lost faith in his profession), Dick nonetheless manages to facilitate Nicole's move to independence by serving the role of passive caretaker, or mother. Fitzgerald thus exposes a contradiction within Dick's role as analyst – Dr. Diver may endow Nicole with a new sense of self, but only by abdicating the Freudian thinking and social assumptions that have served him thus far. Dick can bring the analysis to a close, but doing so will leave him without gender position, without class position, without professional status.

Whereas for Dick the image of the dry breast registers symbolically - signifying his loss of belief and narrative power - the correspondent suckling that Nicole performs ramifies at the level of voice, as increased awareness and narrative control. Like Laplanche's nursing child, Nicole by nursing gains a new understanding of adult language, and the adult world. This shift is

most evident earlier in the same chapter, when Nicole, angered at the rapid decline of her husband's social graces, overhears two French laborers:

Through a cluster of boughs she saw two men carrying rakes and spades and talking in a counterpoint of Niçoise and Provençal. Attracted by their words and gestures she caught the sense:

'I laid her down here.'

'I took her behind the vines there.'

[...]

'Well, I don't care where you laid her down. Until that night I never even felt a woman's breast against my chest since I married – twelve years ago.' [...]

Nicole watched them through the boughs; it seemed all right what they were saying – one thing was good for another person, another good for another....[I]t was a man's world she had overheard; going back to the house she became doubtful again. (277)

Here Fitzgerald reveals the extent of Nicole's burgeoning sense of self by way of an additional encounter with adult language. Beyond the conversation's electric charge of illicit sexuality, the mere fact of Nicole Diver's overhearing it recalls an earlier moment from her life – the letters to Captain Diver. As I have argued above, Nicole in her wartime correspondence with Dick often appears lost, struggling to piece together the sexualized messages threaded throughout Dick's letters. In Laplanche's terms, the younger Nicole encountered an adult world "entirely infiltrated with unconscious and sexual significations" to which she does not "have the code" (Laplanche

127). Despite her incestuous experience and acumen, the adult (“man’s”) world remained, for Nicole, “enigmatic.”

By 1929, though, things have changed: Nicole “[catches] the sense” of the gardeners’ utterances with ease; her capacity as observer, as interpreter of adult language, has improved. The word “breast,” Laplanche’s central enigmatic image, appears before her (“felt a woman’s breast”), as if transferred from Dick’s narrative space to her own. And this nascent power to decode the formerly enigmatic messages of others signals a more important change in her understanding of self. In the past, Nicole felt content to absorb the voices and thoughts of others, “a nursling child caught up in the orbit of the other...[passively receiving] its messages” (Laplanche 82). But here Nicole realizes a new desire: “If she need not, in her spirit, be forever one with Dick...she must be something in addition, not just an image on his mind, condemned to endless parades around the circumference of a medal” (*TN* 277). The break is not total; Nicole desires only to be something “in addition,” not something else entirely. Her diffident language here also suggests an unwelcome internal avowal: though Nicole makes the first tentative steps toward emergence as an independent self (for Laplanche, she moves towards “narcissistic closure”), she realizes that her ego remains linked to Dick’s. A complete separation will require more concrete embodiment.

VII. “perhaps I’ve gone back to my true self” – a new Nicole

Though it takes several more chapters to crystallize fully, a shift has occurred at the close of Book III, Chapter vi – the emergence of a new voice for Nicole, a new controlling perspective that will dominate the narrative from this point onward. Fitzgerald made this transition more

obvious in a scene from an earlier draft. After worrying momentarily over her “dry suckling” at Dick’s “lean chest,” Nicole adopts a new perspective, signaled by a shift in her voice:

Then pushing Lanier aside she walked up to Mlle and said *with a voice that neither her grandfather nor Lady Sibly Biers would have found wanting*

‘This is my house, and I said we are going to have a picnic. The Doctor is not going.’[my italics] (Brucoli, *The Composition* 136-7).

Fitzgerald’s suggestive comparison elides the distinction between self-made nineteenth century American capitalist (Nicole’s “horse-thief” grandfather) and the “fragile, tubercular” Lady Caroline, the “puny” and “decadent...last ensign of the fading empire” (*TN* 271); Dick’s perspective, conditioned by its “delicate politeness” (*TN* 279) gives way to a narrative voice that fuses the finance-focused amorality of the former with the latter’s arch indifference to social conventions. Insofar as this new voice supplants the dominant narrative patterns of Book I, it does so less in terms of a shift in Nicole’s speaking voice than in the narrating consciousness’s gradual internalization of her changed social attitudes. A different Nicole emerges from the Winnicottian pattern I have just outlined, and her new-found perspective has a distorting effect on everything in her ambit; like metal filings polarizing around a magnet, the narrative voice slowly adopts her understandings of vision, race, and character, even as it traces the destructive effect those have on Dick.

The first intimations of Nicole’s new perspective come in her new choice of relationship – her “nascent transference” to Tommy Barban (301). This transition has typically been glossed

as a salutary one: A movement from decaying Dick to his younger, more masculine rival.⁸² Fitzgerald's images of Nicole astride a saddle, welcoming "the anarchy of her lover," tend to encourage such reading. However, the gradual subjective emergence that I have outlined in the novel's second and third books, occurring between infantile patient Nicole and a maternal analyst Diver, means that the former's surrender to Tommy requires further examination. As Winnicott writes, after the attempted "destruction" of the first transitional object (in this case Dick's symbolic breast), the subject enters into "the world of objects," where objects (things and persons outside the self) are no longer viewed as continuous with the subject, but rather as tools to be used (*Playing & Reality* 125-6).

Thus, while Nicole's affair with Tommy has the outward appearances of "transference" and "surrender" to match her earlier transition into Dick's possession, viewing the affair in this manner would mean neglecting the self-confidence that emerges from Nicole's complexly gendered struggle with her husband. This shift in her self-concept emerges most starkly in a moment prior to her first act of infidelity: "[Tommy's] assertion seemed to absolve her from all blame or responsibility and she had a thrill of delight in thinking of herself in a new way. New vistas appeared ahead, peopled with the faces of many men, none of whom she need obey or even love" (*TN* 294). Nicole, whose vision and relations to others were earlier cadged in the language of mirroring, turns her vision outward, seeing Tommy as only one of many potential sexual conquests. She may desire Tommy, but the subjective fusion involved in their coupling differs from that of "Dicole." Having emerged from her regressive fusion with Dick, Nicole retains her own subjectivity; she may adopt Tommy's vocabulary and frame herself in its terms,

⁸² Elsewhere: Tommy "would domesticate the ethos of war Dick has evaded" (Nowlin 73). Goble also identifies Fitzgerald's overt message that "Nicole's affair with Tommy is...healthier because...her desire for his more brutal, aggressive masculinity," a move which "shows the full extent of her recovery from the schizophrenia for which she was being treated" (Goble 202).

yet she retains an agency of her own, one that shapes the narrative perception of the novel's final chapters.

To reveal the extent of these changes in Nicole's perception and narrative influence, Fitzgerald interlaces the Nicole-Tommy seduction episode with language that re-codes the chromatic and racial schemes established in the earlier books. During her time in Dohlmer's clinic, the thought of association or contact with blackness is enough to trigger a psychotic episode (a pattern repeated at the sight of Jules Peterson's corpse). When she re-encounters Tommy Barban on T.F. Golding's yacht five years later, the fear has dissipated. Fitzgerald highlights the extent of the change in Nicole by noting the extreme change in Tommy's skin, "His handsome face was so dark as to have lost the pleasantness of deep tan, without attaining the blue beauty of Negroes" (*TN* 269). This pigmentary alteration dovetails with Dick's earlier observation of Tommy in a suit that could have "sauntered down Beale street on a Sunday" (*TN* 197), to underscore Barban's figurative transition from vaguely "Latin" (18) to fully black, a racial metamorphosis that underwrites the emotional dynamics of his complex relationship with Nicole.

When, in their Monte Carlo hotel room, Nicole accepts Tommy's description of hers as "white crook's eyes," it appears that her transition from the control of one man to that of another has begun: She "delights" in the moral possibilities opened by his words alone, and falls for the first time in a decade under an influence that is not Dick's, so enamored as to think that "everything Tommy said became part of her forever" (*TN* 293). Yet to accept this linear account of Nicole's "transference" to Tommy would mean crediting the narrator's vision too easily. For all its apparent perceptual power, the narrative voice remains for now partly in thrall to Dick's notions of race, class, and gender – inherited from an earlier iteration of the *haute bourgeoisie*.

On such a pre-war understanding, Nicole (as passive object) moves from the possession of her husband to that of her lover. The color-scheme, however, tells another story. As Nicole departs for the Villa Diana, dark-skinned Tommy (who has controlled the course of their affair to this point) kisses Nicole, who feels him “losing himself in the whiteness of her cheeks and her white teeth” (TN 298). The “transference” of power initiated by the influence of Tommy’s voice is rebalanced by a reversal in the color scheme. Nicole, newly conscious of her overwhelming whiteness, *absorbs* the distinctively dark skin of her lover.⁸³ No longer intersubjectively fused with her husband, the new Nicole asserts her power over the “world of objects” both by dominating another man (one of subjunctive many) and by rejecting the racial codes that governed her life up until this point, moves that signal the increasing distance between the two Divers. Rather than altering the narrative structure (which becomes, if anything, more linear and static during the Nicole-dominant sections of Book III), Fitzgerald signals the ascendant influence of the independent Nicole’s perspective by gradually re-inflecting the schemes of race and class that held together the “beautiful, lovely safe world” of the Dick-dominant earlier books. If the Divers of Book I represent the “furthermost evolution of a class” as it hangs on the edge of a “qualitative shift,” (TN 21-2) then this last portion of Book III traces the ramifications of that shift.

VIII. “When he stops knowing things”: Cubist Vision and Character Dissolution

As Dick's personal decline proceeds, and even begins to leach out into the wider social world, issues surrounding race and color serve as the primary locus for its expression, the points over which an increasingly bitter Dick scrapes against a world that he formerly navigated with

⁸³ Adding to the reversal of colors, the oral imagery suggests a reversal of penetration, as “Tommy is absorbed [into] the body of Nicole whom he worships” (Messenger 165).

such ease. After their divestment from the Zurich clinic, the Divers pay a visit to Mary Minghetti (formerly North), an old friend who has since married the fantastically wealthy “ruler-owner of manganese deposits in southwestern Asia” (*TN* 258). Hosain Minghetti’s vast wealth has earned him a papal title and naval salutes in London, yet he resists the simple racial categorizations to which the (still Dick-inflected) narratorial voice inclines. Working within Dick’s distinctly American and post-Civil War racial categories, it at first classes Hosain as “not quite light enough to travel in a Pullman south of Mason-Dixon.” Yet the ensuing description signals a division within the voice, an implicit recognition that this dated and provincial vocabulary won’t do. So the voice, in its attempt to place Hosain, reaches in another syntactic direction, piling nouns together in an awkward train-car construction that concatenates four ethnic groups and two continents: “the Kyble-Berber-Sabeian-Hindu strain that belts across north Africa and Asia” (*TN* 258-9). For Messenger, Minghetti’s racial (and locational) vagueness recapitulates the economic regime from which his fortune derives: Minghetti is racially “hybridized” to the point where his figure is “traversed by relations to a stateless capitalism” (174). Where Dick’s “beautiful lovely safe world” of Book I rested on an economic regime bound by racial and national restrictions, the two figures of male dominance in Book III (Barban and Minghetti) signify the rise of a new and unfettered economy. Tommy Barban’s dual roles as mercenary and stock speculator frustrate the notion of national boundaries on capital, and both men’s racial indeterminacy attests to social changes that render Dick’s pre-war social distinctions obsolete.

The Divers’ reactions are telling. Where Nicole readily accepts Mary North’s social climbing and rejection of American racial codes,⁸⁴ Dick instead clings to those divisions more fervently. It begins as a slip at dinner, leading Nicole to reproach her husband by asking, “Why

⁸⁴ Even after being snubbed by the new Mary on the Tarmes beach, Nicole utters “I like her” (*TN* 287).

did you use your word spic in front of him?” to which Dick responds “it was a slip” (*TN* 260). Her specific notation of “spic” as *Dick’s* word points to a larger pattern in his verbal behavior, both suggesting the nascent divergence in their vocabularies (Nicole no longer thinks of herself as Dick when she talks), and recalling the fact that the slur has surfaced before. Earlier in Rome, when his claims upon Rosemary are threatened by the presence of her co-star Nicotera (“one of many hopeful Valentinos”), Dick (who feels “increasingly Victorian”) makes a desperate gamble for her attention by assigning Nicotera the same epithet: “He’s a spic!” (*TN* 217-8). Such “slips” litter Book III – metastasizing into a larger pattern - until Nicole a few months later comes to fear the sound of Dick’s voice: “Uncharacteristic bursts of temper surprised her – he would suddenly unroll a long scroll of contempt for some person, race, class, way of life, way of thinking” (*TN* 267). The voice that once united disparate social groups and “promised ...an endless succession of magnificent possibilities” (16) is reduced to reciting the most venomous and base of stereotypes.

I say “stereotype” (rather than “slur”) deliberately. While Rattray is correct, for example, in stating that Dick’s racist clichés betoken a “narrowed vision” (91), stereotype (with its peculiar logical structure) has particular importance for understanding Dick’s behavior at this point in the novel. Racist discourse, writes Bhabha, depends on “‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness” (18). Further, as the central rhetorical strategy of colonial discourse, stereotype “vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that *must be anxiously repeated*...as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual licence of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in practice, be proved” [my italics] (Bhabha 18). Dick draws on this central ambivalence of stereotype, repeating vaguely familiar racial and class epithets as a means of ensuring their continued validity – as if to render them

valid via performance itself. Like Faulkner's Jason Compson IV, Dick iterates the knowledge-claim at the center of his stereotypic utterances for a larger purpose – to preserve a fading institutional structure; in this case, the racial, social, and gender-normative schemes that were on display in the novel's first book.

By asserting the “fixity” of the racial and ethnic stereotypes he invokes with increasing frequency towards the novel's close, Dick moves to preserve not only the “beautiful lovely safe world” of pre-war values, but more specifically those of his father, raised “south of Mason-Dixon” (*TN* 258), a father whose values (which Dick inherits) were the “somewhat conscious” ones “of a young Southerner coming north after the Civil War” (*TN* 164). The discursive pattern involved here is a familiar one, as Vološinov notes: “The ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign, to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it” – the “eternal character” of Vološinov's social signs matching closely with Bhabha's sense of repeated “fixity.” However, Vološinov continues, this illusion of eternal truth cracks in times of “social crises or revolutionary changes,” moments when the instability and contradiction of a given class' ideological signs are revealed fully (*Marxism* 23). Occurring as they do in a time of “social [crisis]” (the post-war departure from the values of Book I) Dick's stereotype-utterances therefore constitute not so much a change in his perspective as the expression of formerly tacit ideological assumptions, now distasteful to those around him because they are no longer shared – bigotry rather than knowledge.

The epistemic valence of Dick's attempt at institutional preservation also carries weight. More than arbitrary social distinctions, the atmosphere embodied in the Tarmes beach of 1925 depends on distinct modes of social knowledge. As I have noted in my introduction, the aura of

calm and assurance that emanates from Dick (and thus pervades the Divers' umbrella-circle) in Book I depends on his knowledge of a network of shared values (social facts). These include a collectively approved sense of "the exact relation between classes," (*TN* 57) along with clear divisions of race, sexuality, and normative mental health. By 1929, however, the social substrate underlying Dick's "knowledge" has shifted. Nicole and Mary have rejected racial divisions by engaging in relations with men of "indeterminate racial status" (Keller 153), and the private Tarmes beach has become a "club" where "it would be hard to say who was not admitted" (*TN* 281).

More significant for Dick's dissolution, his central mode of knowledge – his professional role as psychoanalyst – gradually loses its influence. The causes of this loss are myriad, but both have to do with Dick's loss of belief in the moral sources of the discipline. At his earliest appearance in the novel's *fabula*, psychiatry is for Dick a vehicle for his "intricate destiny" (*TN* 118). By the time of his exit from the clinic, however, this attitude toward psychoanalysis has altered irrevocably; Dick sees the "ethics of his profession dissolving into a lifeless mass" (*TN* 256). Such an ethical dissolution equates to epistemological loss for a man who frames his clinical practice in the language of morals; in Dick's eyes, therapy means "teaching the...ABCs of human decency" (*TN* 201). With no behavioral codes to enforce, no collectively acknowledged source of social knowledge on which to draw, Dick's voice loses its force. Early in their marriage, as his wife reminds him in her monologue, Dick recognized the essential connection between social influence and knowledge; he "used to say that a man knows things and when he stops knowing things he's like anybody else, and the thing is to get power before he stops knowing things" (*TN* 162). That Dick has indeed "stopped knowing" (or at least refused it)

in this sense is obvious by the final chapter, when he abandons psychiatry to practice (unsuccessfully) “general medicine” in a series of ever-smaller New York towns (*TN* 314).

Absent the social codes that have governed his behavior to this point (and which rendered him so powerful a centripetal force earlier in the novel), Dick finds the social landscape around him increasingly inexplicable, a sign that the novel’s center of narrative gravity has shifted to Nicole. The world that once yielded itself up to the comprehension of Dr. Diver shifts to one whose material conditions more readily match the understanding of his wife; and Fitzgerald conveys this change not through any substantial alteration in narrative structure (which grows only more conventional as the novel nears its close), but rather via the visual register of the text – particularly in terms of color and depth. As Rattray writes, Dick’s “narrative vision, dependent on tradition, structure, order, hierarchy, [and] control” gives way to an alternative view.

Dick’s psychiatric training took place within the depth-psychology of the Freudian tradition, and Dick’s early association with this method ramifies into his personal and narrative vision. To those caught up in the intermental “web” of Book I, Dr. Diver’s social and intellectual gifts manifest as a capacity for peering beneath surfaces, for plumbing depths. Dick charms his guests, says the narrator, by “recognizing the proud uniqueness of their destinies, buried under the compromises of however many years” (*TN* 27). Later, for his dinner companions, his charms unearth earlier version of “themselves,” for whom those earlier selves have been “blurred” by time (52). Elsewhere he points out the core of Rosemary’s character: “her real depths are Irish and romantic and illogical” (164). Like the bits of glass that he rakes from beneath the sand at Tarmes in Book I, Dick – by digging beneath the surfaces of his guests – returns to them their sense of personal or psychic depth, wholeness – forging a continuity between past and present selves that betokens a whole person. For Cokal, these social talents are

continuous with Dick's professional abilities; Dick "is a narrativist, and ultimately, a fiction writer, imposing a largely imaginary structure of understanding and explanation upon the chaos of desire and trauma, explaining an unpleasant present with a plausible past and thereby creating a 'whole' and healthy person" (78).

Fitzgerald renders Dick's early talents as a capacity to see within and restore whole selves, and thus his later decline also registers at this level. The vocabularies of vision (and of visual art in particular) serve as a vehicle for Fitzgerald to express the deeper changes in cognitive and social conditions that occur between Books I and III. In 1935 letter to Sara Murphy (on whom Nicole is partly based), Fitzgerald himself frames his characterizations in the language of painting: "-in those and in a hundred other places I tried to evoke not you but the effect that you produce on men – the echoes and reverberations – a poor return for what you have given by your living presence, but nevertheless an artist's (what a word!) sincere attempt to preserve a true fragment rather than a 'portrait' by Mr. Sargent" (*A Life in Letters* 288). The choice of John Singer Sargent as a point of contrast is particularly revealing. To elucidate the contrast Fitzgerald has in mind, we may turn to Henry James' description of one such "portrait," Sargent's *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882):

The place is regarded as a whole; it is a scene, a *comprehensive impression*; yet none the less do the little figures in their white pinafores (when was the pinafore ever painted with that power and made so poetic?) detach themselves, and live with a personal life....The naturalness of the composition, the loveliness of the *complete effect*, the light, free security of the execution, the sense it gives us of *assimilated secrets and instinct and knowledge* playing together – all this makes the picture [an] astonishing work.... (688)

For James, this full portrait stands out for two features: first, a sense of completeness (“comprehensive impression” and “complete effect”) – the figures are presented in their living entireties. And second, the epistemological depth that provides the impression with its completeness (“assimilated secrets and instincts and knowledge”). James saw a kindred spirit in the focal perspective of the young Sargent, but the salient features of this portraiture appear just as pointedly in the narrative voice that surrounds Dick *Tender Is the Night*’s first book, which views characters as complete because it registers psychic depths – mutually “assimilated secrets...and knowledge.”

Fitzgerald’s deliberate marking off of his technique from Sargent’s (and by extension, James’) implies more than just a difference in borrowing. While his intent in the 1935 letter may have been to avoid giving offence, Fitzgerald’s emphasis on “fragment[s]” and “effects,” rather than whole portraits, points to a shift in his aesthetic allegiance. Simply put, several of the visual motifs central Book III aim to approximate the aesthetics of Cubist art. If, as I have argued, Sargent’s portraits (with their prose analogue in James’ fully formed characters) represent a distinct perceptual regime, a vision of social and material reality, then Cubist aesthetics represent an assault on that reality. Cubism, writes T.J. Clark, seems to “[annihilate] the world,” and then proposes “other, outlandish orders of experience to put in the world’s place” (174). Deborah Rothschild’s definition, in turn, substantiates Clark’s “orders of experience” by linking them to Fitzgerald’s own talk of fragments:

Cubism was not only a radical form of painting; it also represented a new way of experiencing the world, one tied to the fractured character and staccato pace of modern urban life...this new kind of picture making...did not mirror reality but instead shifted,

broke apart, and realigned it in unexpected ways....Cubist artists were of their time in a profound way, reflecting the uncertain new mechanized age the world had entered. (35)

In place of James' depth of field and assimilated secrets, we have, as Fitzgerald's letter suggests, "fragments." To see how this somewhat abstract description cashes out at the visual level, we may look to a description of Georges Braque's technique in *Houses at L'Estaque*, which involves the "breaking of the contours defining both the things depicted and the overall faceting so that surface appear to flow together, blurring above all the distinctions between solid form and space, foreground and background." Rather than providing the illusion of intimacy or depth, the painting captures the "three-dimensionality of the world as revealed to the eyes" and re-displays it to viewers as a pattern of flattened planar fragments, a "two-dimensional thing" (Musgrove). The Cubist vision departs from the sense of depth and completion communicated by the formal structure of Edwardian portraiture, and I have highlighted it here because of its importance in evoking the perspectival change that occurs near the novel's end. In Book III, Fitzgerald at key moments employs visual techniques and textual allusions that point to Cubist art as a means of conveying the changed psychic and social landscape of the novel's end.

I mention Cubism not merely for its occurrence in a single letter of 1935. Fitzgerald's personal writings around the period of *Tender*'s authorship are rife with references to modernist visual art, and while under the sway of the American expatriates Gerald and Sara Murphy (modernist artists and friends of Picasso), it seems clear that he came to view Cubist painting as a model for his own aesthetic ambitions. Writing to his editor in 1924, he lamented what he saw as the failure of Gertrude Stein's "attempt to transfer the technique of Matisse + Picasso to prose" (*Correspondence* 123). Yet a year later, following the publication of *Gatsby*, a letter to Max Perkins expresses a desire to succeed where Stein had failed: the "new novel" would be

“something really new in form, idea, structure – the model for the age that Joyce and Stien are looking for....” (Brucoli, *Some* 228). Elsewhere, critics have readily identified in *Gatsby* the influence of Cubist art,⁸⁵ so it seems puzzling that a similar influence has yet to be noted in *Tender*.

This may have to do with the subtlety of its appearance in the novel. If Cubist art shaped Fitzgerald’s thinking about narrative structure in 1925, then by the time of the later drafts its influence had shown up in more subtle form. Describing Dick’s flaws in the 1932 “General Plan,” Fitzgerald writes that Dick “is a superman in possibilities,” or at least appears to be, “from a certain bourgeoisie [*sic*] point of view”; however, Dick fails because he “lacks that tensile strength...of Brancusi, Leger, Picasso” (*Some* 332). That Fitzgerald locates his protagonist’s moral failing vis-à-vis a litany of modernist artists is crucial for understanding Dick’s Book III collapse. Dick’s perceptions, conditioned to a James-Sargent atmosphere of personal depth and assumed knowledge, are less able to function in the more centripetal environment figured by the fragmented palette of Cubist art. As Berman writes, artists in the 1920s, taking their cue from increasingly formalist photography, abandoned “‘realistic renderings of the human body’ as a whole,” and instead rendered the self symbolically, “through iterations of personal imagery” – where previous artists had seen whole persons there were now assemblages of fragments.

Although the majority of this Cubist pattern – the fragmenting of persons, flattening of depths – occurs in the Nicole-focused Book III, there are intimations of it from even the psychologically centripetal space of Book I. When Dick first sits in Rosemary’s hotel room,

⁸⁵ Miller reads *Gatsby* as a cubist text by applying cubist terms to the novel’s chronology and point of view: “Fitzgerald fractures the telling by moving both forward and backward simultaneously, recreating layers of time and providing increasingly varied and contradictory renditions of the ‘true’ story....[*Gatsby*] evokes the ‘fragmentary and unconsoling feel of lived life’” (197). She also points out that aspects of *Gatsby* (as well as bits of *Dick Diver*) were inspired by Gerald Murphy.

aiming to put an end to their brief flirtation by using his characteristic grace, something goes wrong:

Her face drooped with dismay and disappointment and Dick said automatically, ‘We’ll have to simply –“ He stopped himself, followed her to bed, sat down while she wept. He was suddenly confused, not about the ethics of the matter, for the impossibility of it was sheerly indicated from all angles, but simply confused, and for a moment his usual grace, the tensile strength of his balance, was absent. (65)

Fitzgerald’s language tends deliberately toward the visual: the clarity of “sheer” in conjunction with the Cubistic movement of viewing things “from all angles” yields, for Dick, a sense of vertigo. He cannot function in this space. Echoing the language of Fitzgerald’s “general plan,” Dick’s uncertainty derives not from the “ethics” of his situation, but from something more insidious – a loss of the “tensile strength” that Fitzgerald identified as the mark of the modernist artists mentioned in the plan. That Rosemary catalyzes this moment of instability is no accident. As Godden writes, her profession identifies the young actress with a personal frangibility analogous to that embodied by the Cubists: “Rosemary’s self is a number of styles which exist to be alienated from her; like fashion, she is created to earn envy so that her style(s) may be purchased by others” (“Introduction” xxvii). Rosemary’s profession (as an actress aligned exclusively with the new medium of film) thus introduces the notion of characters being separable from their qualities. Although Rosemary’s presence induces a moment of characterological instability, the consequences of this loss of tensile strength become clear only with the introduction of other distinctly “new” situations that further destabilize Dick.

If the hotel room scene with Rosemary introduces Dick's characterological vertigo, then another scene from Book I points to its causes. Arriving at a party on the Rue Monsieur, Dick and Rosemary find themselves bewildered by their surroundings:

The outer shell, the masonry, seemed rather to enclose the future so that it was an electric-like shock, a definite nervous experience...to cross that threshold, if it could be so called, into the long hall of blue steel, silver-gilt, and the myriad facets of many oddly beveled mirrors. The effect was unlike that of any part of the Decorative Arts Exhibition – for there were people in it, not in front of it. (TN 71)

From the moment of entering, Dick and Rosemary feel the “shock” of a new aesthetic – not merely in the sense of a new artistic mode (as indicated by an allusion to the 1925 Paris Exhibition),⁸⁶ but in the deeper sense of aesthesis, a new way of sensing. Light scatters across the array of reflective surfaces (“steel,” “gilt,” “mirrors”) whose odd bevels fragment vision and recall the “faceted” surfaces of Picasso's *Houses at L'Estaque* (Musgrove). Fitzgerald's aesthetic effects, though, never stray far from their social sources, and so he drags us further down:

There were about thirty people, mostly women, and all fashioned by Louisa M. Alcott or Madame de Ségur; and they functioned on this set as cautiously, as precisely, as does a human hand picking up jagged broken glass....to exist in it was as difficult as walking on a highly polished moving stairway, and no none could succeed save with the aforementioned qualities of a hand moving among broken glass – which qualities limited and defined the majority of those present. (TN 71-2)

⁸⁶ A Parisian art and design event that aimed to “establish the pre-eminence of French taste and luxury goods.” It placed an emphasis on modernist design and featured architecture and fashion inspired by Cubism and other avant-garde art forms (“Art Deco: The 1925 Paris Exhibition”).

The fractured visual palette of the previous paragraph links up to the “jagged broken glass” of Fitzgerald’s metaphor, though we must look elsewhere for its correlatives. The women here (whom the thoroughly Dick-inflected narrator of Book I sarcastically glosses as figures from children’s stories) are mostly lesbians, a new and unfamiliar social group in whose ambit the Victorian protagonist’s interpersonal expertise has little influence. Dick (who had formerly shown such a talent for “picking up” bits of broken glass [281]), finds an unnavigable Cubistic perceptual space matched by a group of people who (though proximate to his own class) are immune to his socially centripetal charms; it comes as little surprise that he rushes out. The antithetical movement intimated in the Rue Monsieur scene is genuine, but it will take time to manifest openly.

It is only years later, in Book III, after the death of a favorite patient exacerbates Dick’s long-building “lesion of vitality,” that Fitzgerald revisits the centripetal forces that menaced Dick in the Rue Monsieur. In Lausanne, while interviewing a prospective patient (whose father has called Dick because of the son’s homosexual tendencies), Dick’s new perspective crystallizes in an observation:

[for] Dick, charm had always had an independent existence, whether it was the mad gallantry of the wretch who had died in the clinic this morning, or the courageous grace which this lost young man had brought to a drab old story. Dick tried to dissect it into pieces small enough to store away – realizing that the totality of a life may be different in quality from its segments, and also that life during the forties seemed capable of being observed only in segments. His love for Nicole and Rosemary, his friendship with Abe North, with Tommy Barban in the broken universe of the war’s ending – in such contacts the personalities had seemed to press up so close to him that he became the personality

itself...it was as if for the remainder of his life he was condemned to carry with him the egos of certain people, early met and early loved, and to be only as complete as they were complete themselves. (245)

Dick, the “narrativist and fiction writer” (Cokal 78), experiences a vicious return of the socially and visually centrifugal forces he evaded on the Rue Monsieur (again in the presence of homosexuality), though by this time the “broken glass” imagery of Book I’s Cubist space has penetrated into Dick himself; his interior life seems fundamentally disjointed, “capable of being observed only in segments.” Whereas in the Rue Monsieur the fission of visual and social space – the loss of Dick’s ability to unify disparate particulars – seems almost a non sequitur, by Book III it accords with a general narrative pattern.

There are two reasons for this. First is the changed status of those particulars. Whereas earlier in the novel personal qualities attach to inner depths and character,⁸⁷ here the predicates begin to float free of their objects (“charm” evolves an “independent existence”; as do “egos”). This freeing of emotional or qualitative features from their objects maps onto another set of changes that have occurred between Books I and III of *Tender Is the Night*; the rapid expansion of the finance-driven US economy in the late 1920s and its subsequent destabilization of older metrics of value (those by which Dick had lived). Drawing on Simmel’s “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” Jameson makes the same observation with respect to the development of abstract painting techniques in the same period:

[For Simmel] the processes of the new industrial city, very much including the abstract flows of money, determine a whole new and much more abstract way of thinking and

⁸⁷ E.g. Of the Iron Maiden’s mistakes “so deeply were they part of her” (185).

perceiving, radically different from the object-world of the older merchant cities and countryside. What is at stake here is a dialectical transformation of the effects of exchange value and monetary equivalence; if the latter had once announced and provoked a new interest in the properties of objects, now in this new stage equivalence has as its result *a withdrawal from older notions of stable substances and their unifying differences as individual things*, one may now purchase as if it were their various, henceforth semiautonomous qualities or perceptual features; and both color and shape of field detach themselves from their former vehicles and come to live independent existences as fields of perception and as artistic raw materials. [my italics] (Jameson 258)

On this argument, the move to an increasingly financialized economy, one based on monetary (exchange) value – rather than substance - has consequences for the ascription of other properties, as well. Jameson identifies the emergence of abstract colors and shapes with their decoupling from this stable notion of substance, and Fitzgerald creates a parallel moment in the separation of personal qualities (differences) from formerly whole persons or characters (stable substances). The destabilizing influence of free-floating money becomes all the more obvious in Book III. The centrifugal sensation that Dick experiences with the patient in Lausanne only intensifies when the Divers convert their (substantial, concrete) stake in Gregorovious' clinic into a liquid asset (insubstantial, mobile, abstract). At this point, the “flow of money” engulfs Dick's life entirely: “Due to the sale of their interest in the clinic, and to developments in America, there was now so much that the mere spending of it...was an absorption in itself” (257).

The tremor that Dick feels in Lausanne, severing qualities from their persons, thus hints at a larger change in his social milieu. However, I have isolated the Lausanne moment for a

second reason: Its consequences at an internal level, the statement that Dick is fated “to carry with him the egos of certain people,” and to be “only as complete as they were complete themselves” (245). Despairing at the failure of his marriage and his physical abasement in Rome, Dick may see this moment as dissolution of character; but Fitzgerald offers another perspective, one that sees this fragmentation of personality as something natural. When Tommy Barban accuses Nicole of being “a little complicated after all,” he’s answered with a deceptively flip demurrer, ‘Oh no,’ she assured him hastily. ‘No, I’m not really – I’m just...a whole lot of different simple people’” (292). Dick’s newly revealed conclusions about life as being comprehensible only in segments, if something of an admission of defeat on his part, fits perfectly in with Nicole’s emergent perspective, a vision more amenable to a world in which objects – and by extension persons – matter less than do the “abstract flows” of capital, style, social influence identified by Jameson and Rothschild. Dick’s earlier perceptions were tied to tangible objects and persons: “he cared only about people” and “had little memory for places...until they had been invested with color by tangible events” (220). Nicole’s by contrast, flatten individuals into assemblages of their qualities – seeing those as fungible commodities, separable from particular persons: “She had little memory for people,” (279); and the few she does admire are viewed as repositories of quality, “she sought in them the vitality that had made them independent or creative or rugged” (180). The concluding phrase of the Lausanne segment I quoted above – “to be only as complete as they were complete in themselves” – thus shows a surrender of Dick’s perspective, his views of self and world and language, to an emergent viewpoint associated with Nicole.

But that viewpoint – what Bakhtin would call her finalized voice – deserves at least a brief explication. Where Dick’s perceptions are conditioned to the depths and distinctions of the

world reflected in Sargent's portraits, Nicole's tastes (and her sensibility) are more modern. When regarding the room where she and Tommy first consummate their relationship, she compares it to "so many Cézannes and Picassos" (295). I have already established that Dick's depth-based notion of personhood gives way to a more modern, fragmentary perspective congenial to Nicole, but her perspective also surfaces Book III's key moments of observation, particularly when those involve a visually centered description of a declining Dr. Diver.⁸⁸

Beyond its attunement to the fragmentary perspective of Cubist art, Nicole's voice (and the narratorial voice that focalizes around it) shows a deep filiation with the economic conditions that precipitated the development Cubism, and the institutional structures that resulted. As Wertsch has argued, observing speech genres (the types of utterances, phrases, and vocabulary) can lead us back to the institutional and interpersonal sources of a speaker's thinking and utterance (144). Thus, by attending to the speech genres that Nicole employs, we will be able to explicate the institutions that stand in positions of narrative power by the novel's end. However, this is not to say that Nicole's association with finance is an overt one – her reliance on it occurs rather at a greater remove – befitting her station as somewhat above the play of economic conditions. Instead, financial terms surface in Nicole's vocabulary only glancingly— as metaphors or comparisons.

After her recession from the intermental mind she once formed with Dick, Nicole enters a new psychological and narrative space, one in which her thoughts are shaped by influences from her present and earlier selves. The narrator's depiction of her Book I shopping excursion, which limns a brief image of the entire capitalist system as it "tithes" to Nicole, ends with the

⁸⁸ This visual association should come as little surprise, given that Nicole is partly based upon Zelda Fitzgerald, who in the years immediately prior to the publication of *Tender* had pursued an avocation as a painter, one with strong cubist influences (Seidel, Wang and Wang 145).

suggestion that she “illustrates very simple principles” (55); but it will take another influence to make those principles the guiding force in Nicole’s life – one that she identifies proleptically in the monologue of Book II: “one time I may even be an aspect of you, Tommy Barban” (162). Tommy is ideally suited to facilitate the emergence of Nicole’s final voice, as all aspects of his character violate the codes by which Dick governed her former thought. Beyond his aforementioned racial ambiguity, Tommy is one-time mercenary who has “domesticated the ethos of the war Dick evaded into reckless speculation on the stock market” (Nowlin 73), placing old European ideals of masculinity in the service of delocalized market forces. It comes as little surprise, then that he encourages Nicole to frame her new life, with its new morality, in monetary terms. When she struggles to make sense of her growing distance from her husband, Tommy simplifies: ““You’ve got too much money....That’s the crux of the matter. Dick can’t beat that”” (293).

Although the relationship between Nicole’s burgeoning fortune and Dick’s loss of control becomes clear to Nicole only by the novel’s end, the somewhat more sensitive instrument of the narratorial voice registers this earlier on. In Book II, following her outburst at the Agiri fair, a frustrated Dick reflects on the thin separation of his own wealth from Nicole’s, which threatens (as it grows) to absorb his entirely: “Out of three thousand a year and what dribbled in from his publications he paid for his clothes and personal expenses...[by doing so] he maintained a qualified financial independence. After a certain point, though, it was difficult – again and again it was necessary to decide together as to the uses to which Nicole’s money should be put” (170). “Point” sticks out here – marking metaphorically a barrier dividing the (financially) independent Dick from his wife’s fortunes, and, at a more literal level, suggesting monetary figures – decimals or numeral elements of a balance sheet, especially the position of stock or futures

prices.⁸⁹ My reading may seem to over-reach, but the figure recurs, “her income had increased so fast of late that it seemed to belittle his work....it was an indication that life was being refined down to a point” (170-1). Dick reflects on his situation, and his reflections are glossed by a narrating voice that employs the financialized vocabulary that Nicole will only adopt fully in Book III. The narrator thus stands suspended between Dick and the nascent Nicole viewpoint that Dick has already begun to detect – Diver would not find the growth of Nicole’s fortune a threat unless he had already begun to see the suasiveness of such a perspective – one that increasingly sees Dick’s intellectual labor and Nicole’s capital as fungible commodities. The narrator completes the metaphorical move later, when a cynical Dick frames both himself and his career as assets that have been locked up “in the Warren safety deposit vaults” (201).

And, as the narrative voice shifts gradually into the space of a resurgent Nicole, this assessment seems all the more accurate. By the time of his final departure from Tarnes in summer 1929, even Dick’s dated visual apparatus has started to take on Cubist characteristics. Gazing down at the beach he had “discovered” years earlier, he notices Tommy and Nicole, “two other figures, a man and a woman, black and white and metallic against the sky” (*TN* 313). At first glance, this conjunction of beach and sky makes no visual sense: Brucoli and Baughman suggest that it may be an error in perspective, as Dick is looking *down* at the beach from a higher vantage point (*Companion* 150). On a traditional, perspective-based understanding, they are right to object; but on a Cubist reading, Fitzgerald’s original phrasing coheres. If the images of beach and sky, as seen by Dick, seem compressed, it is because the Tarnes beach has taken on the

⁸⁹ “Point” was in use as American financial jargon as early as 1855 (“point, n.1”).

Cubist cast characteristic of Tommy and Nicole's perspectives, in which "hinging and flattening and dovetailing" compress depth into two-dimensional surfaces (Clark 204).

But, lest we think Fitzgerald has left his narrating voice in thrall to Nicole's new voice, this apparent endorsement soon fades. Dick averts his gaze, gives an ironic "papal blessing" of the beach, and departs. We are left with an image of the American *haute bourgeoisie* in the summer of 1929, only months before the October Crash that will decimate most of their fortunes, and (along with them) the new value-system that those modern forms of wealth had appeared to inaugurate, a value system of which Nicole's new perspective is representative. So, too, this sense of impermanence hangs over the Cubistic visual perspective, and with good reason. As Clark writes, for all its pretensions to constitute a wholly new language-game, a new vocabulary for organizing a different kind of social experience (represented here by the new value-system endemic to Tommy and Nicole), Cubism failed. This new visual style never delivered on its larger epistemic claims to represent new and stable forms of life, of organizing coherent collectivity: "Cubist painting is not a language; it just has the look of one...it is a set of...procedures, habits, styles, performances" – stylistic moves that have the outward appearance of a collective understanding, but unable to deliver the results (Clark 223). By 1934, Fitzgerald had in many ways come to the same realization: Gerald Murphy, the American Cubist artist who had dazzled the Fitzgeralds in the 1920s and served as partial inspiration for Dick Diver, abandoned painting entirely after October 1929 (Rothschild 9).⁹⁰

And finally, with this knowledge of what looms on the horizon for Nicole and her class, we can turn to the novel's concluding moment with the sense of perspectival complexity that it

⁹⁰ This was ostensibly in order to care for his sick son Baoth, but the timing is uncanny.

demands. In it, the narratorial voice recounts, second-hand, Nicole's correspondent's perspective on Dick after his return to New York. Nicole follows as her former husband migrates from major city (Buffalo) to a diminishingly smaller series of towns – Lockport, Geneva, and then Hornell (314-5). Again, the narratorial voice tracks Dick as his once integral persona splinters – Dick's progress through a series of diminishingly smaller towns matched by a gradual stripping away of his professional distinctions. Dick devolves from psychiatrist to practitioner of "general medicine," and then (after a malpractice lawsuit), "sett[ling] down," and finally into a kind of reported silence – in a town so small that Nicole knows only its name (Hornell). If Dick at earlier points sensed the a growing centrifugal force – a severing of characteristics from their predicates – then the truncated final chapter traces that force to its logical conclusion; the deep, integrative, centripetal narrative center of Book I is shown devoid of every social and personal distinction that rendered him so attractive at the narrative's outset, of the epistemic vocabularies with which he had organized the world; and, most tragically, even of his voice. However, we should be careful not to read Dick (really Diver by now) as wholly at the mercy of external forces: as Nicole realizes during their abbreviated divorce proceedings, "Dick had anticipated everything" (TN 311). Instead, Diver's final progress shows him abandoning the class positions and moral vocabularies of the pre-War era, and rejecting the flatter and more tenuous standards that have taken their place – new values which he realizes are ephemeral. Left without class position, professional identity, or a moral language he can endorse, Dick chooses silence.

IX. Conclusion

By the novel's conclusion, then, Fitzgerald has taken us through the transition from one voice, one type of group consciousness, to a vastly different one. The atavistic pre-war atmosphere conjured by Dick Diver on the Tarnes beach in 1925 exemplified a particular

group's vision of itself: Confident in the exact, hierarchical relations among economic, gender, and racial groups, as well as the post-war American expatriates' collective sense of nearly Calvinistic election; and above all, curated and sustained by the organizing force of the paternal, nearly godlike psychoanalyst Dr. Diver, who ensured both social unity and the sense of individual and collective wholeness. As parts of his world, those near him are permitted to view themselves as possessed of both boundless interior depths and the personal "intactness" and unity to sustain them. The drama of the text, as I have outlined, deals largely with the changing shape and dynamics of this social unit. In charting the breakdown of the codes governing Dick's earlier world, Fitzgerald also traces the emergence of a new variety of collective voice, a new kind of narrative vision emblemized by the figure of Nicole Warren's "original" self. Where her husband's social world had depended on order, hierarchy, and a sense of shared thoughts and values, the milieu Nicole navigates is flattened – heedless of the older distinctions, predicated not on the value of depth or personhood but quality, and thus less stable in its sense of identity, less permanent in its sense of mutual recognition.

Although the initial impetus for this investigation was to unpack the cognitive-narratological features of *Tender Is the Night*, the genuine interest of the novel resides in how it deploys representations of perception and group cognition as a means of registering larger social and institutional changes. Fitzgerald's use of visual perception, dyadic intersubjectivity, and group minds deserves attention because he uses these psychological features to mediate a larger process of dialectical social change. The loss of Dick Diver's capacities is so striking, Fitzgerald argues, because these capacities represented a variety of experience, and a kind of community, that can no longer exist. In place of the "beautiful lovely safe" space of interpersonal consensus, Fitzgerald posits a vision of the American collective that has degenerated not just morally, but

psychologically – held together by a thinner thread: “They were no longer the simple ma and pa and son and daughter, infinitely superior in the qualities of kindness and curiosity to the corresponding class in Europe, but fantastic Neanderthals who believed something, something vague, that you remembered from a very cheap novel” (“Echoes” 20). It comes as little surprise that their narrative dominance is even shorter-lived.

In contrast to the mute and somber note on which *Tender* concludes, I hope that the above analysis, despite (or, more likely, because of) the plodding and heteroclitic nature of its conceptual apparatus, may leave open new avenues for analyzing a novel whose hermeneutic riches remain incompletely excavated. The most salient example comes with what Fitzgerald called the “sickness material”; my examination of the Dick-Nicole relation hinges on a framework derived from object-relations theory, yet it leaves open the question of Rosemary’s role in shaping the prenominate dyad: How she disrupts the transference-relation, to what extent she recapitulates Nicole’s earlier role, and how her departure from Dick’s influence differs from Nicole’s. The latter portions of the essay have applied the visual concepts of Cubist art to theorize the fragmentation of character across the novel, culminating in scenes that pit Dick Diver against milling clusters of anonymous minor characters. Although others have attempted analyses of major-minor character relations in the novel,⁹¹ the economic concerns that striate *Tender*’s final chapters make these characterological connections particularly rife for readings that employ Alex Woloch’s concepts Character-Space and Character-System, potentially theorizing the collective dynamics in ways that my more psychologically inflected reading has not. And finally, work remains to be done with Nicole, who (as I have argued) can no longer be

⁹¹ Buehrer has a smart, if somewhat theoretically underpowered, discussion of this topic.

reduced to avatar of Zelda Fitzgerald or epiphenomenon of Dick; her voice, her self, is simply too complex for that.

CHAPTER THREE

A “Submerged Iceberg Life”: Concealment, Codes, and Narrative form in *The Human Factor*

I. Opening Gambits

Reflecting on a particularly scathing review of his third novel, a book inspired by his intensive re-readings of Joseph Conrad’s *The Arrow of Gold*, a 27 year-old Graham Greene made a resolution which he later recalled in his autobiography:

I knew the truth when I read it. There was nothing for me to do but dismantle all that elaborate scaffolding built from an older writer’s blueprint, write it off as apprentice work and start again at the beginning. Never again, I swore, would I read a novel of Conrad’s – a vow I kept for more than a quarter of a century.... (*A Sort of Life* 212).

Taking Greene at his autobiographical word, however, is always dangerous, especially where Conrad is concerned. Conrad had what Robert Pendleton calls a life-long “fatal attraction” for Greene (Pendleton 1), and biographer Norman Sherry details the extensive re-reading and reappropriation of Conrad’s 1907 novel *The Secret Agent* that Greene performed only a few years later while composing his fifth novel, *It’s a Battlefield* (*The Life...Vol. 1* 457). This later work shares with its 1907 intertext a common setting (central London), plot pattern (police pursuit of a working-class murderer), aspects of narrative technique, and a host of recognizable character templates: an overworked Assistant Commissioner of police, a married communist couple, and an aristocratic lady patroness (Sherry 457-8). Such borrowings are interesting not in

themselves,⁹² but insofar as they suggest Greene's continual engagement with Conrad's fin-de-siècle espionage narrative. *The Secret Agent* and the spy novel that followed it, 1911's *Under Western Eyes*, remained a preoccupation for Greene throughout his working life, and it is only by keeping this in mind that we can begin to understand his final engagement with Conrad's story in *The Human Factor* (1978).

This is not to suggest that the many filiations between *The Human Factor* and Conrad's espionage narratives have gone without critical notice. Pendleton, in his career-spanning study of Greene's relationship to Conrad, focuses on the interrelations of plot. In *The Human Factor*, Pendleton claims, "Greene creates a generic gestalt from the political espionage narratives of *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, as well as from the dramatization of global politics in *Nostromo*, to make the wide-ranging 'prediction', as Greene terms it, of America and West Germany's intervention in West Africa," as well as a version of the interracial love story in *Victory* (Pendleton 135). Although his overview emphasizes the parallels between Conrad's geopolitical stories and Greene's more muted drama of internal bureaucratic intrigue, Pendleton does emphasize the foremost Conradian element of *The Human Factor*, "its reworking of a plot which shows how impoverished interiority leads to mistaken forms of public commitment" (137). A suggestive observation indeed, but because of the longitudinal framing and plot-focus of Pendleton's study, it remains somewhat under-examined in the monograph; I will revisit it later.

Where Pendleton's survey emphasizes the structural similarities between Conrad's and Greene's novels, other critics have chosen to fix on their thematic and rhetorical connections. For

⁹² I'll spare my reader further discussion of *It's a Battlefield*.

Gary Storhoff, Greene's protagonist Maurice Castle embodies both the double-agency of Adolph Verloc and Winnie Verloc's refusal to look beneath surfaces (59-60). These parallels, he writes, work in the service of a larger political message, with the pessimistic Conradian view of a "divided self" eventually giving way to Greene's own vision of a utopian conciliation between Marxism and Catholicism (66). By contrast, Andrew Wright in *Fictional Discourse and Historical Space* chooses to focus on the institutional politics of the British SIS. Maurice Castle resembles Winnie Verloc in several ways, but the real target of Wright's reading is Sir John Hargreaves – a figure of the "Establishment," who has "become so corrupted by the corruptions of the present day" that he authorizes the intra-agency assassination of an innocent man solely for the sake of preserving public relations (94). The symbol of imperial moral rectitude folds under the pressures of contemporary geopolitics. For Wright and Storhoff, then, the allegorical qualities of *The Secret Agent's* main characters carry over, with little translational distortion, to their later counterparts in *The Human Factor*.

For all their extensive research and synoptic treatment of plot, character, and political context, however, the extant accounts of the Greene-Conrad relation underlying *The Human Factor* have thus far somewhat neglected the territory of narrative technique. This essay will open by attempting to correct that oversight. More specifically, my interest lies in exploring how the close rhetorical parallels between *The Human Factor* and its Conradian source-texts relate to the various texts' disparate use of narrative technique. If, as Fredric Jameson says, "Conrad marks...a strategic fault line in the emergence of contemporary narrative, a place from which the structure of twentieth-century...cultural *institutions* becomes visible" (206), then Greene's novel constitutes a continuation of this same fault line. Greene, I will argue, appropriates the thematic and structural elements that are overt in Conrad's telling – typed characters that symbolize

physically the institutions they represent, an ironic narratorial viewpoint – and repurposes them *formally*, by rendering them internal to the novel’s narrative voice.⁹³ The institutional structures and viewpoints that Conrad targets in *The Secret Agent* (or at least their 1970s analogues) are still present in *The Human Factor*, yet in Greene’s telling, they are re-encoded, incorporated as part of a deceptively simple narrative technique that makes demands on its reader that are equal to, if less overt than, the challenge presented by Conrad’s dense prose. In positing this connection, I should be clear: My intention is not to provide an exhaustive, side-by-side comparison of Conrad’s novels and *The Human Factor*. Rather, I hope to use moments from *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* sparingly, as frames or entry points for a reading of Greene’s novel and the ways in which its narration reflects the novelist’s political and ethical positions. The narrative voice that emerges in *The Human Factor*, with its associated devices of free-indirect discourse, nested internal narration, ubiquitous codes and secret boxes, and a persistent focus on childhood and the past, emerges from Maurice Castle’s desire to divide his private life from his public one, for continued interiority in an historical period when such divisions are rapidly collapsing under pressure from institutional sources. To begin, we will first need to turn back to another common trope of the critical literature.

Games proliferate throughout *The Human Factor*. Maurice Castle and his adopted son, Sam, play hide-and-seek in the Berkhamsted common, and Sir John Hargreaves – the novel’s Buchan-like figure for declining empire – frames the profession of spying in deliberately ludic terms: “We are playing games...all of us. It’s important not to take the game too seriously or we may lose it” (*THF* 29). More importantly, Dr. Percival (the novel’s primary villain) combines a

⁹³ In this Greene extends the internalizing pattern that we noticed in *Tender Is the Night* – moving toward a narrative voice that incorporates the different valences of exterior and psychological dramas. Greene’s depiction merely carries forward Fitzgerald’s move by clothing his characters’ inner languages in an official vocabulary.

procedure-loving bureaucratic mindset with a totalizing moral and political indifference to his actions. As Snyder argues, Greene crystallizes Percival's allegorical pathology by fashioning him as "the consummate solo gamester" – an avid chess player and trout fisherman ("Loyalty" 34). These game-related tropes translate also into an ideological dimension – a competition between the personalized viewpoint of Maurice Castle and the institutionally-derived ones of his employers. And this competition, in turn, recalls a specific reading of *The Secret Agent*.

In a 1978 essay, Terry Eagleton argues that the hybrid generic form of Conrad's novel, part domestic drama, part espionage thriller, derives from "an ideological contradiction embedded within it" (25). And on his account, the novel's central generic problem takes on the character of a game; more specifically, a competition between a series of Wittgensteinian language-games, or alternative conceptual vocabularies for explaining reality. For Eagleton, the operation of this ideological competition occurs through the plot: Conrad's major characters represent various positions, and following their respective paths in the narrative reveals the stakes of Conrad's story:

The novel's own 'game' is then the operation of this ideological effect. In a series of mutually cancelling moves, it satirizes Winnie Verloc's blinkered petty-bourgeois viewpoint from the standpoint of the anarchist activity she ignores, while simultaneously satirizing the anarchists as petty bourgeois hypocrites from the standpoint of the 'fanatical' Professor" who is then negated by the humanity of Winnie/Stevie - the game cancels out. (29)

Eagleton interprets Conrad's narrative in bluntly allegorical terms, and rightly so. Further, the allegorical dimension of Eagleton's discussion has application to Greene's later narrative, which stages a similar competition between opposing characters and ideological viewpoints; Greene's "games" are simply more difficult to detect.

II. Internal Games

Although Snyder, Newman, and others have already highlighted the significance of the game-trope to Greene's novel, deeper and more interesting readings emerge when one deploys the idea of games at the level of narrative form, much as Eagleton does in his reading of *The Secret Agent*. And as with Eagleton's summary of Conrad's text, *The Human Factor* has the structure of a kind of game; specifically, a competition involving Maurice Castle, his KGB handlers, and the MI6 agents who pursue him. Alan Hepburn reads this as a variant of the classical spy novel plot of the chase, most famously instanced by John Buchan's spy hero Richard Hannay, who views his espionage activities as a kind of sport. By contrast, Greene's story shows a hunted man who "transmute[s] fear into method," resulting in the novel's more deliberate pace. Greene's may be a more sophisticated variant of this type, but Castle's series of evasions and eventual defection to Moscow is merely "another version of the chase, one that does not involve sprinting" (Hepburn 40). Hepburn captures something essential about Greene's own reading of the novel: in writing it, the novelist declared his ambition to create a "a novel of espionage free from the conventional violence" of the post-war genre (Greene, *Ways* 296). For all its accuracy, though, this reading of the game-plot still does not go far enough: The details of Greene's narrative choices and style in *The Human Factor* demand a more fine-grained application.

In order to see what I have suggested above, we should turn to the novel's opening lines, and the uneasy picture they provide of Maurice Castle's interior life:

Castle, ever since he had joined the firm as a young recruit more than thirty years ago, **had taken his lunch** in a public house behind St. James's Street, not far from the office.

If he had been asked why he lunched there, he would have referred to the excellent quality of the sausages; **he might have preferred a different bitter from Watney's, but the quality of the sausages outweighed that.** He was always prepared to account for his actions, even the most innocent, and he was always strictly on time. [emphasis mine]
(*THF* 3)

The tenses stand out. What begins firmly in the conventional storytelling grip of the habitual past-perfect tense (“ever since he had joined...he had taken”) shifts into something else – a subjunctive register that opens with a question (“if he had been asked”), but then saturates the remainder of the paragraph with internalized answers (sausages, bitter). Add to this the iterated “always” of the final two lines, and the impression emerges of a character eager to reassure, careful to preempt any further investigation. Gaston diagnoses moments such as this (which proliferate in the text) as signs of Castle’s alienation and consequent neurosis: Descriptions such as the novel’s opening, with its minute attention to detail “appear neurotically precise and factual,” an approach which is fitting “for a character who perceives things like a foreigner or exile among strangers” (Gaston 127-8).

Yet even so perceptive a reading as Gaston’s fails to go far enough. Gaston captures the atmosphere of paranoia that pervades the scenes focusing on Castle, but his interpretation dead-ends in that judgment. To my mind, a further question can now be posed: how does the vaguely paranoid narrative voice that follows Maurice Castle encode the perceptions and judgments of those around him? Such judgments (figured above as unvoiced questions to which Castle respond) are unlikely to stem from Castle alone (or at least to originate *solely* from him), so the challenge now becomes one of tracing the provenance of the voices that condition both Castle’s

perceptions *and* the narrative voice that follows him – a voice which, though deliberate depersonalized at times, takes on an even more active role in the dictation of the story’s events.

The encroaching narratorial presence to which I have alluded involves itself further in the scenes that introduce Castle’s domestic life. Several hours after the opening of the novel with Colonel Daintry’s security check, Castle finishes his evening commute home:

Castle pushed his bicycle up King’s Road. He had bought his house with the help of a building society after his return to England. **He could easily have saved money by paying cash, but he had no wish to appear different from the schoolmasters on either side**...For the same reason he kept the rather gaudy stained glass of the Laughing Cavalier over the front door. He disliked it...**but again because his neighbors bore with theirs, he preferred to leave it alone.** The schoolmasters in King’s Road were strong upholders of the aesthetic principles of North Oxford, where many of them had taken tea with their tutors, and there too, in the Banbury Road, his bicycle would have fitted well, in the hall, under the staircase.

...

He opened his door lock with a Yale key. He had once thought of buying a mortise lock...but he had restrained himself – his neighbors were content with Yale....(*THF*

12). [emphasis mine]

Again, the habitual past-perfect tense (“had bought”) alternates with its own subjunctive variant (“he could easily have”). But here the narration allows slightly more information to seep out: We find that Castle’s habituation to questioning voices extends beyond his workaday responsibilities as an intelligence officer to his life as a private citizen. The same note of hesitancy pervades each moment, though in this case Greene permits a glimpse of the perspectives in response to which

Castle adjusts his behaviors. If the questioning voices of the novel's opening segment are left somewhat obscure, Castle's thoughts and reactions – here transposed by the narratorial voice – at least *begin* in response to the projected viewpoints of his neighbors, a desire not to stand out.

Yet to read Castle's deliberate care in this most trivial of circumstances as mere longing for neighborly inconspicuousness would mean accepting (as Maurice Castle might desire) too much at face value, and thereby neglecting the implications of the novel's opening sequence. Castle dutifully manages the smallest details of his appearance – the bicycle, the variety of front-door lock – not only for the sake of the King's Road schoolmasters. The first hint of something unusual in the narrator's phrasing emerges from its syntax; each time, an assertive or descriptive clause is set forth, only to be reversed in the following line ("he could...but"). Each detail of Castle's commute and household decoration meets with the same, almost metronomic, pattern of qualification. For some diagnostic assistance, we can turn to Bakhtin's notion of the "word with a sideways glance":

The innerly polemical world – the word with a sideways glance at another person's hostile word – is extremely widespread, both in practical everyday speech and in literary speech, and possesses enormous style-determining significance....[A]ll self-deprecating, florid speeches which repudiate themselves in advance and have a thousand reservations, concessions, loopholes, etc., belong to this category, too. Such a speech as it were cringes in the presence or in the anticipation of another's word, answer, or objection. The individual manner in which a person constructs his speech is in large degree determined by his characteristic awareness of the other person's word and his reaction to that word. (*Problems* 163).

If Greene's narration stops short of presenting us with Maurice Castle's inner monologue, it still manages to provide a version of Castle's thinking as he "anticipates...another's word"; in this case, as potential questions. The mildly focalized psycho-narration of this passage shows how the aging spy has *encoded* such questions, such reactions, into the minutiae of his life. If Castle's actions seem overly cautious – or even paranoid – it is because every step he takes is always already oriented in response to a separate perspective, in answer to questions posed by another voice. The "game" in which Castle engages (and whose details will be explicated later) thus takes on the form of constant anticipation of, and reaction to, the judgments, questions, and accusations from another's "voice" or perspective.

The opening moments of ostensible scene-setting and narrative exposition thus serve a second purpose: repeating the pattern of the security check interrogation that Castle undergoes with Daintry on the same day. With this relationship established, we can now pose a further question: If Castle's answers and actions in the check were oriented in response to Daintry's questions (his voice), then to whose voice does Castle respond everywhere else?

II. Irony and Allegorical Figures

In the most basic sense, this question can be answered simply: Castle responds to the questions and attitudes of his superiors in the SIS, Sir John Hargreaves and Dr. Emmanuel Percival. However, understanding the symbolic significance that these voices play in Castle's inner life, and in the larger schemes which he undertakes, will require some background. And for this we can turn back to Conrad; or, more specifically, to the role played by institutional figures in *The Secret Agent*. Like his later counterpart in Greene, Conrad's double-agent figure, Adolph Verloc, encounters and orients his actions around the perspectives of various institutional representatives, but in *The Secret Agent*, this drama largely takes place at the level of story or

plot, rather than discourse (narration). And Conrad can make this move because – as many critics have noted – each of his central characters plays an allegorical role. Jacques Berthoud reads these as embodiments of national character: “*The Secret Agent* plainly contains versions of national mentalities, such as the Russian (Mr. Vladimir), the American (the Professor), and the British (Winnie Verloc, the Assistant Commissioner)” (Berthoud 101).

If Winnie Verloc, in her role as the “ideal Victorian spouse,” stands in for a kind of British domestic ideal (Eyeington 124), then the Assistant Commissioner, only recently returned from years as a colonial administrator, represents its foreign counterpart. To this list we might usefully add the detective character Inspector Heat (something of a transplant from earlier crime fiction), and Conrad’s representation of the highest strata of British government, Sir Ethelred, a man who “is emblematic of the morally neutral, self-aggrandizing bureaucrat” (Thompson 96). Last, it seems worth noting that both Verloc and Winnie, irrespective of the legality of their home business, function as representatives of commerce.⁹⁴ In this brief *dramatis personae*, then, Conrad includes each of the major governmental and social institutions that come into conflict in the novel’s plot: The bourgeois family, law enforcement, colonial interests, foreign governments, and capitalist interests. As a result, when Eagleton talks of the “language-games” involved in the text, with their “mutually cancelling moves,” he actually refers to the interplay between institutional figures and forces in the text, a set of interactions which produces the novel’s plot. With this (admittedly crude) set of institutional relations in place, we can now turn to Verloc’s story-level interactions with other characters.

As an exemplum of this class of allegorical characters, it seems apposite to begin with the description of Inspector Heat, the novel’s archetypical representative of the Victorian law

⁹⁴ Although Conrad’s satire also targets a number of anarchist figures, I will confine myself here to those representative of more formalized institutions

enforcement officer. It is Heat's discovery of Stevie's collar tag that suggests a simple solution to the novel's central crime, and Heat's personal relationship with Verloc that renders so simple a solution impossible. For an account of the Inspector's viewpoint, and the narratorial position that drives much of the novel's characterization, see the following moment, during which the Inspector encounters one of the novel's anarchist figures:

Chief Inspector Heat was, of course, not insensible to the gravity of moral differences. But neither were the thieves he had been looking after. They submitted to the severe sanctions of a morality familiar to Chief Inspector Heat with a certain resignation. They were his fellow-citizens gone wrong because of imperfect education, Chief Inspector Heat believed; but allowing for that difference, he could understand the mind of a burglar, because, as a matter of fact, the mind and instincts of a burglar are of the same kind as the mind and instincts of a police officer. Both recognize the same conventions, and have a working knowledge of each other's methods and of the routine of their respective trades....And Chief Inspector Heat, arrested within six paces of the anarchist nick-named the Professor, gave a thought of regret to the world of thieves – sane, without morbid ideals, working by routine, respectful of constituted authorities, free from all taint of hate and despair (Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 73-4)

The most salient – and most humorous – moments in this characterization derive from the sheer bureaucratic ordinariness of Inspector Heat's perspective: as an appointed guardian of late Victorian bourgeois society, he sees both the police and the criminals they pursue as possessors of a common morality. Through the Inspector's personal lens of universalizing bourgeois values, even the theft and assault endemic among London's criminal classes count as a kind of legitimate trade, if only because both the perpetrators and their prosecutors recognize "the same

conventions.” Thieves are on Heat’s view something like cobblers or salesmen – laborers like their legitimate counterparts, only in their case reserving the special punishment of “Seven years hard” (73), a form of mutual recognition that demarcates them from the more dangerous anarchists. However, and as I hope the preceding lines have indicated, the presentation of such stereotypically institutional figures as Inspector Heat also carries with it a deep note of narratorial sarcasm.

And it is this last piece – the ironizing effect of the narratorial voice – on which we should focus next. Rather than an incidental intrusion of an otherwise neutral presence, Conrad’s above presentation of Inspector Heat is emblematic of *The Secret Agent*’s narrative technique as a whole; as Conrad himself writes in his preface to the 1920 edition of the novel, his “artistic purpose” in “was formulated with deliberation and in the earnest belief that *ironic treatment alone* would enable me to say all that I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity” [my italics] (*The Secret Agent* 251). Thus, to understand the position that novel takes on the institutions represented by its central characters, and how this position may aid us in understanding Greene’s related techniques, we need first unpack the nature of the “ironic treatment” to which Conrad refers, and how that treatment contributes to the novel’s atmosphere.

While the recognition of *The Secret Agent* as driven by a kind of “authorial irony” or somewhat more nebulous “Conradian irony” proliferates throughout the critical literature,⁹⁵ the most technically exacting account belongs to Seymour Chatman. On this reading, the two central poetic methods that Conrad employs to create a sense of irony have to do with the presentation of characters’ “inner lives,” their interior voices. And more specifically, how these voices clash

⁹⁵ Berthoud uses the term freely and with little attempt at definition (*passim*), while Jakob Lothe opens his excellent account of narrative in *The Secret Agent* by remarking on how both it and its predecessor, *Nostramo*, employ “the pervasive and multi-faceted use of irony...[which is] closely related to narrative effects and modulations,” and also to “fictional manifestations of Conrad’s skepticism and political insights” (Lothe 226).

or contrast with the facts and perspectives that frame them. In the first type of ironizing technique, a character's thoughts are quoted or imitated in a direct and faithful fashion, with the contrast arising from a dramatic irony – the asymmetry between the quoted thoughts and the reader's knowledge of external events within the novel's plot, with the tension arising from the character's own misunderstanding of her circumstances (Chatman 118). In the second technique, the collision comes from without: "the latter, the case of paraphrase" deals with "differences between how the character *might* have expressed the thought or feeling in her own diction, as we know it from direct dialogue, and how the well-spoken narrator actually expresses it" (118). In this second variety, tension arises from a conflict between the voices of the narrator and the character on which it focuses; not a discrepancy of factual beliefs so much as an internal tension between what Vološinov would call two differing "evaluative accents" (Vološinov 102) conditioned differently as they may be by education, class, and other influences. This second variety is most crucial for Conrad's work in *The Secret Agent*, as it allows him to establish and elaborate on a narratorial perspective – one that, though stopping short of an alignment with the author himself – stands as distinct from those of the other characters.

Though both of the ironizing techniques identified by Chatman surface throughout the novel, the two crystallize most importantly in Conrad's presentation of the novel's central authority figure – Sir Ethelred. As both Secretary of State and the member of a family whose "unbroken record of...descent surpass[es] in the number of centuries the oldest oak in the country" (108), Ethelred emblemizes both the formal and informal class-structures of late Victorian Britain. As Lothe writes, Ethelred's scenes in Chapters VII and X occasionally veer from the ironic into the comic, as suggested by the character's historically allusive name, as well as his near-parodic description: "Vast in bulk an stature, with a long white face, which,

broadened at the base by a big double chin,” and wearing garments “unfortunate from a tailoring point of view” (108). Ethelred’s appearance thus reinforces his social stance – physically ensconced to the point of immobility (much like the oak to which he was earlier compared). Comic details aside, though, there are moments of narratorial irony (as described by Chatman) that deserve attention. Falling into the first category of faithful quotation is Sir Ethelred’s consistent refusal to “go into details” when presented by the Assistant Commissioner with novel’s central crime (110). Although in Chapter VII such an insistence of vagueness appears to befit a man of the secretary’s standing, the repeated refusal to engage with any operational detail – rendered at one point as an almost “physical dread” of specifics (175) – forms a gradual filiation between Sir Ethelred and the novel’s other willful ignoramus: Winnie Verloc.⁹⁶

Where the faithful external view of Ethelred (Chatman’s first ironic method) reveals a certain discrepancy between the seriousness of the novel’s central investigation and the flippancy with which he treats it, the second avenue for ironic voices applies itself more to Sir Ethelred’s internal monologue: When the Assistant Commissioner departs to confront the agent of a foreign empire who has fostered domestic terrorism, the secretary turns his attention to the (putatively) more important task of “his country’s domestic policy, the battle-ground of his crusading valour against the paynim Cheeseman” (176). “Paynim,” with its oddly antiquarian note, should be a clue – much like his tree-aged ancestors, or the unfortunate pre-Norman monarch with whom he share a name, Sir Ethelred seems (via the narrator’s paraphrase) to view himself in the vocabulary of crusading, even in issues so trivial as the regulation of domestic fisheries. Conrad’s methods for the ironic portrayal of his central institutional representative thus take three separate avenues: First, the story-level of Ethelred’s name and physiognomy. Second, the

⁹⁶ Who repeatedly insists that “it may not be good for one to know too much” (135) and that certain matters “do not stand much looking into” (141).

dramatic-ironic tension between the secretary's perceptions and the brute facts of the novel's central crime plot. And third, deliberately sarcastic moments of narrated monologue that serve to further dis sever the institutional figures of the novel from the most crucial events of the novel's plot; Sir Ethelred remains ignorant of his errors, confident in his illusions. Conrad's ironizing moves work thus by creating overt tensions between either the characters and the facts of the fictional worlds around them *and* moments of dissonance between character-perceptions and the narrative voice whose job it is to summarize them. In either case, the ironizing move always involves a form of externalization – the viewpoint that corrects such misperceptions comes from the narrator, rather than within the mind or discourse of the character herself.

I highlight these moments less to draw attention to Sir Ethelred (whose plot and symbolic importance are limited) than to point out the externalizing technical means whereby Conrad at once produces, and then undercuts, the political figures who saturate *The Secret Agent*. Inspector Heat, the Assistant Commissioner, and Sir Ethelred all give various forms of official chase in their pursuit of Verloc, who remains largely insensible of their anger, apart from a general sense of paranoia over losing his funding at the hands of the Tsarist embassy he serves and nervousness over police pursuit in the wake of Stevie's accidental death. In Greene's later adaptation of the novel, however, the ironizing methods all move into an interior space, so to investigate how *The Human Factor* follows in the path set by Conrad, we will need to investigate the several paths by which Greene conjures interiors absent in *The Secret Agent*.

III. Irony, Intermental Perspective, and Internalized Voice

To follow Greene's path in adapting Conrad's narrative technique, we first need a clearer definition of irony. In his monograph on psychoanalysis, the Russian theorist Valentin Vološinov provides a useful account: "irony in general is conditioned by a social conflict: It is the encounter

in one voice of two incarnate value judgments and their interference with one another” (*Freudianism* 113). In the case of *The Secret Agent*, Conrad works to create a consistent sense of “conflict” or interference by his production of a narratorial voice that stands apart from both characters and author. As Lothe points out, the narrating voice’s frequent deployment of personal pronouns and gnomic moral judgments “points towards a certain limitation of authorial understanding – introducing a more subjective and less self-assured perspective” (Lothe 231). In the above mentioned case of Sir Ethelred, for example, Conrad broadens the distance between the narratorial perspective and that of the Secretary of State by momentarily adopting “the attitudinal perspective of the Assistant Commissioner,” whose view of the Greenwich explosion prizes exactly those specific which Sir Ethelred is said to fear. In Conrad’s writing, as this example shows, the ironic narrative viewpoint that saturates the novel emerges from a contrast between sets of defined and external viewpoints – an established narrative voice (with its own set of values) and the variant perspectives of the central allegorical characters. The narrator may gravitate toward one or another of these perspectives for emphasis, yet the “authorial narrator,” as Lothe terms him, retains a distinct verbal and moral register.

In Greene’s writing, by contrast, the narrative perspective recedes: there are no defocalized gnomic pronouncements, and no use of the first person by the narrative voice. That said, the narrative voice of *The Human Factor* nevertheless contains a version of the encounter “of two incarnate value judgments” described by Vološinov; Greene’s variant of it is simply more difficult to detect. Conrad’s value-conflicts take place externally, at both the level of story (*fabula*) and discourse (*sjuzet*). In the former, typed and symbolic figures collide in moments of contrasting interests, as in Verloc’s resistance to Vladimir’s plans, or in the repeated instances of mutual recognition between Winnie and her husband. At the level of discourse, the tensions arise

between the narrated perspectives of the aforementioned characters and the independent, personalized views of the narrating voice. In Greene's novel, however, value-embodiments differ at both of the aforementioned strata.

At the level of story, Greene's primary actors possess a complexity that renders them resistant to the simple allegorical identifications made in Conrad's text. Maurice Castle, for instance, is – like Adolph Verloc – a double agent who uses his domestic status as a cover for illicit activities, yet his genuine attachments to his country, ideological cause, and domestic situation render him equally similar to Verloc's wife, Winnie. Likewise, Sir John Hargreaves, the head of MI6, shows traces of John Buchan's gentleman-adventurer character (similar to the Assistant Commissioner), but also shows filiations with higher-ranking institutional figures. While Buchan's Hannay characters retain a certain "outsider" status with respect to the levers of bureaucratic power, Sir John more closely resembles his counterpart, Sir Ethelred, in longing for the morality of a simpler time depicted in the Trollope novels he reads for leisure. The central figures in *The Human Factor*, as this brief survey shows, do serve allegorical functions; but these roles are no longer so easily divisible – each of the novel's central actors must manage a divided set of loyalties and varying personal characteristics. The brevity of the novel may frustrate a deeper exploration, but Greene's central figures contain psychological complexities that bring them closer to Forster's "round" characters than his "flat" ones.

Before moving on to yet another complex distinction, I should pause to include an example to both concretize this notion of interiority and further explicate the distinction between Conrad and Greene's characters. The scene I have in mind comes from Book V, when Hargreaves spends a quiet Sunday at his estate, leafing through Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* as an escape. For a while, it works: Trollope provides "a calm Victorian world where good

was good and bad was bad and one could distinguish easily between them” (189) – much like the one inhabited Hargreaves’ Conradian counterpart, Sir Ethelred. But doubt encroaches. Hargreaves finds himself drawn, “unwillingly,” into sympathy with Trollope’s central confidence man, Augustus Melmotte: “he remembered with regret what he had said to Dr. Percival when Percival expressed a liking for Davis. He had used the word ‘traitor’ as Melmotte’s colleagues had used the word ‘swindler’” (190). The decisions leading up to Davis’ assassination may have been professionally motivated, but Hargreaves’s misgivings have a decidedly personal cast: “Poor devil, he thought...Did Davis guess what potion Doctor Percival might be dropping into his whisky when he left the room for a moment?” (190). Here, as always, Vološinov helps: If we think of Hargreaves’ new thoughts under the heading of “behavioral ideology” (“that atmosphere of unsystematized...inner and outer speech which endows our every instance of behavior...and every ‘conscious’ state with meaning” [Vološinov 91]), then we might view these incipient doubts as emanation from its lowest levels: “To this stratum” Vološinov writes, “belong all those vague and undeveloped experiences, thoughts and idle, accidental words that flash across our minds. [These are] miscarriages of social orientations” or “ideological scraps” (92).

Incomplete and fragmentary, yes, but a sign of depths, of changed orientation within Hargreaves that his Conradian counterpart never undergoes. Hargreaves’ personal intuitions leak into higher levels of his thought, leading him to realize that the Africa he inhabited (and the “calm Victorian world” that attended it) no longer exists. When speaking that evening with the South African intelligence agent Cornelius Muller, he realizes that “[h]is Africa had been the impoverished Africa of the bush, but politics lay like the detritus of a mine over the south.” (192). Here Hargreaves’ “ideological scraps” begin to exert pressure on his higher-level

institutional and political thinking, inflecting his formerly nostalgic memories of a colonial Africa, which he sees now as irrevocably saturated by “politics,” and leading him to recognize a mole within his own institution. Thus the “scraps” kicked up by the putatively innocuous reading of a Victorian novel lead Sir John to unexpected personal reflections and organizational moves, linking up with the “upper strata” of behavioral ideology, where words and ideas link directly with established ideological systems (Vološinov 92); Greene conjures a personal and political history, a conflict between character and type, and an interior space for Hargreaves where none would have been possible for his Victorian counterpart, an interior consisting of the gap opened between “upper strata” expectation and the low-level personal intuitions that push against them. With this example in mind, we can next turn to the case of a character whose type and layered interiority depart from the Conradian model entirely.

Having outlined the manner in which Greene subverts the flat “control” archetype⁹⁷ by endowing the outwardly typed Hargreaves with an unexpected measure of interiority, we may turn to his more intricate examples, defined less by story-level character functions and more by the discursive complexity of their inner lives. The individual persons of Greene’s fictional space less easily represent fully fledged viewpoints, and thus the crystallized “voices” to which both Bakhtin and Vološinov refer must surface in more oblique form – not as the voices or perspectives of individual characters, but in the conjunction of those voices, of those fictional minds. In *Social Minds in the Novel*, the cognitive narratologist Alan Palmer makes the case that prose fiction deals not only in the presentation of individual minds, but also in the portrayal of

⁹⁷ In their seminal early survey of espionage narrative, *The Spy Story*, Cawelti and Rosenberg define the “Control (the agency director)” as one of their central spy-story tropes (220). The name likely derives from le Carré’s venal and ruthless MI6 director who first appears in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (hence the use of “C” with reference to Hargreaves). However, where Hargreaves has the first intimations of moral tension or interiority, le Carré’s Control subordinates his entire morality to the pursuit of agency objectives.

larger cognitive and emotional groupings- what he calls “intermental units” or social minds (Palmer 47-8). On this account, intermental groupings may range widely: from the momentary intersubjectivity required for group membership, to the close accordance of thought and attitude in marriages or families (“small intermental units), to large-scale social groupings that involve collective identification and often ideological consideration (“large intermental units”) [47-8]. The most prominent members of this last grouping include the collective perspectives of “society” in Eliot’s *Middlemarch* or Austen’s *Persuasion*, large groups that nonetheless view themselves as in mutual consensus on issues of social or political importance (48).⁹⁸ However, where the conflict between social and individual minds in *Middlemarch* often takes an externalized presentation, as with Dorothea Brook’s conflict with what Palmer calls “the Middlemarch mind” (64), later novels such as *The Human Factor* often demonstrate such disputes in less overt ways. With Palmer’s terminology now in place, we can begin to unpack the complex role of social perspective in Greene’s novel.

Greene provides the most blatant example of such encoding – the internalization by one character of others’ voices – in the case of Castle’s textual double, Colonel Daintry. Late in the novel, after returning home from the funeral of an MI6 colleague who has been wrongfully accused of treason and subsequently murdered by agency leadership (mainly to avert public embarrassment), a distraught Daintry considers resigning his post. Though Daintry’s reflections bring him to an unsurprising conclusion, Greene’s choices for the embodiment of Daintry’s interior voices deserve a closer look:

⁹⁸ For Palmer, the two central questions of intermental-intramental (social-personal) mind relations drive the plot structure and character concerns of Victorian prose: “a fierce debate took place within the nineteenth-century novel on the nature of social minds. The epistemological aspect related to the extent to which it is possible to have knowledge of the workings of other minds. The ethical aspect questioned the purposes to which our knowledge of other minds could be put” (64).

He felt guilty of failure – a man in late middle age near to retirement – retirement from what? He would exchange one loneliness for another. He wanted to be back in the Suffolk rectory....He crossed the hall and, very softly opening the door in front of him, he surprised his parents where they sat on the chintz sofa hand in hand because they thought they were alone. ‘Shall I resign,’ he asked them, ‘or wait for retirement?’ He knew quite well that the answer would be ‘No’ from both of them – from his father because the captain of his cruiser had shared in his eyes something of the divine right of kings – his son couldn’t possibly know better than his commanding officer the right action to take....His father, the ex-naval chaplain, who believed in his captain and his God, would have given him what he considered to be the Christian reply, and his mother would have given him the practical and worldly answer. What greater chance had he to find another job if he resigned now than a daily maid would have in the small village where they had lived? (169).

Daintry’s moment of introspective daydreaming is interesting for several reasons: First, that the institutional viewpoints (church, military, economic) are all condensed into determinate material figures not dissimilar from those visible in Conrad’s novel. Second, the almost excessive level of hypothetical detail (“because they had thought they were alone”) only strengthens the sense of the hold these absent viewpoints have on Daintry, regardless of whether their sources continue to exist. Last and most crucially, because the colonel’s moment of imagined social negotiation dramatizes a subtle process of intermental thinking, and understanding its workings is central to understanding the related (and more complex) case of Maurice Castle.

The shift into free indirect discourse suggests this latter parallel: Daintry’s mother and father appear in imagined physical form, but they are not given directly quoted dialogue; rather,

their hypothetical statements appear in free indirect form (“his son couldn’t possibly know”), suggesting the degree to which their perspectives have been taken up by Daintry’s own voice. That is, in these moments of nested free-indirect discourse, Greene shows Daintry internalizing – and internally replicating – the role of focalizing narrator. If the case of Sir John’s nascent interior shows a single mind manifesting a split between inner sense and outward obligation, then Daintry’s case shows a recursion of this process, embedding the entire social and moral division of a Hargreaves-style narrative moment *within* the mind of another character. This process replicates itself, though with different component parts, in Maurice Castle’s mind.

Daintry’s hypothetically focalized reverie represents the relation between an intermental unit and an intramental one in the form of an internal drama, with the central institutional voices transmuted into the embodied forms of his parents. Although the narrating voice following Maurice Castle avoids such drastic alterations, the intermental dynamics of each character’s sections serve the same function. The moments in which Castle countenances or evades the perspective of an intermental unit are simply duller, and hence more difficult to detect. Complicating this is the fact that Castle, unlike Daintry, divides his imperfect ideological and ethical commitments between two institutional groups: MI6 (to whom he is not totally disloyal) and the KGB (to whom he only grants certain forms of information).

The pronouns are a clue. In the case of the Soviet Service – which remains at a greater physical distance throughout the text – Castle’s collective pronouns, when addressed toward this collective, have an uncertain reference. When on an apparently routine visit to the nearby town of Watford, Castle has a brief encounter with a man in a café, and later encounters the same man on the street outside, at which point Greene’s language hints at an added significance of the recurrence:

He saw the man tying up his shoelace fifty yards down the road, and he experienced a similar sense of security to that which he had once felt while he was being carried from his ward in a hospital toward a major operation – he found himself again an object on a conveyor belt which moved him to a destined end with no responsibility, to anyone or anything, even to his own body. Everything would be looked after for better or worse by somebody else. Somebody with the highest professional qualifications. (112)

Castle's "sense of security" hints that he has entered into an institutional process not yet fully revealed by the narrative voice, and the analogy of the "conveyor belt" suggests that Castle has relinquished agency to something larger. Most suggestive, though, is Greene's use of anadiplosis – the repetition of "somebody" in proximate syntactic positions. What at first seems a flip abdication of responsibility (with "somebody" translating to "not-me") changes, after the period, into something more referential. The capitalization of the second "Somebody" gives it the form of a proper name, and Castle's assurance that this unnamed person or organization has not just qualifications, but superlative ones, suggests his incomplete epistemic position – vaguely certain of what he has involved himself in, and with whom. However, this is not to say that Castle desires further knowledge of the situation around him; rather, as the metaphors of the operation and conveyor belt suggest, he adopts a position of willed occlusion. To adopt another of the novel's central tropes, he puts himself in a "box."

The reasons for this occlusion, this walling of knowledge, become clearer in the following paragraph, when Greene introduces another central pronoun. Following the aforementioned man from the café, Castle observes a series of minor motions that he takes as spy signals:

When [the man] was opposite the house he took a handkerchief from his sleeve and wiped his nose. It was probably an all-clear signal, for Castle almost immediately heard a creak-creak descending the stairs inside. He wondered whether ‘they’ had taken precautions in order to protect him from a possible follower or to protect themselves against his possible treachery – or both of course. He didn’t care – he was on the conveyor belt. (113)

“Someone” of the previous passage evolves from a hypothetical individual into an extant, if still indefinite, “they.” As we learn in the ensuing moments, Castle has come to Watford in order to meet with Boris, his primary handler from the Soviet spy service, the KGB. Looking back to Castle’s reflection above, Greene’s language suggests the subtlety and complexity of the agent-organization relationship: “from a possible follower” and “against his possible treachery” would seem to balance disjunctively (either/or), but the addition of “or both” suggests the instability of Castle’s position as a mole – that *any* situation may contain within it additional layers of treachery or hidden motives. The knowing attitude suggested by Greene’s nested disjunctions seems at odds with the casual “of course,” and Castle’s ensuing declamation that “he didn’t care,” a tension which becomes more pronounced in his next encounter with “they.”

To Maurice Castle, the Soviet intelligence service through which he functions remains distant until the novel’s final chapter. The KGB manifests itself to him only indirectly, through electronic signaling systems, codes, and most importantly, human intermediaries, such as the Hallidays. The latter are a father and son who own a pair of Soho bookshops and provide Castle with needed materials. The elder Halliday, apparently ignorant of Castle’s role as a Soviet double-agent, provides him with dual copies of novels (which Castle then uses in his book codes); the son, who (like Adolph Verloc) runs an adult bookstore, remains absent throughout

the text and serves as the intermediary between Maurice and his handlers. In their roles as conduits between Castle and the KGB, they also enter into his reasoning about the intermental perspective of the organization. When attempting to locate the younger Halliday in order to request a favor, he reflects:

It had always seemed strange to Castle that ‘they’ had chosen so dubious an intermediary as young Halliday, whose shop might be searched at any time by the police. Perhaps, he thought, it was a kind of double bluff. The Vice Squad would hardly be trained in the niceties of intelligence. It was even possible that Halliday junior was as unaware as his father of the use to which he was being put. That was what he wanted very much to know, for he was going to entrust him with what amounted to his life. (180)

The same nebulously referential “they” recurs from the earlier passage, denoting a vague grouping of persons possessed of equally obscure methods. But the final prepositional phrase, with its distended structure that works gradually toward a serious realization (“life”), shows Castle’s anxiety pushing his thoughts in another direction. And again, much as before his meeting with Boris, Castle – despite his declared indifference to the operations of this shadowy intermental grouping – finds himself asking about its operations, its motives.

Later in the novel, after his double-dealing has been unmasked by his colleagues at MI6, Castle receives an additional revelation about his connection to “they,” a revelation that emblemizes the intramental-intermental conflicts that structure the story of *The Human Factor*. In this scene, Castle (who has earlier sent an emergency signal to his KGB contacts) awaits an extraction team, only to be surprised when the elder Halliday arrives instead. Although Castle at first mistakes the visit for a social call, his visitor corrects him: “‘Well, sir, you’ve always been, I think, under a bit of a misunderstanding. My son never concerned himself with things in your

way of business. But *they* thought it just as well – in case of trouble – that *you* believed....” (217).

On one level, this moment follows the spy fiction convention of the twist, of organizational deception – a field agent betrayed by his controls.⁹⁹ More interesting for present purposes, Halliday’s explanation forces Castle to reorient implicit understandings (of mutual trust, of his relations to the Soviet organization, of the membership of their network) on which he had operated for years. Again, Greene’s choice of pronouns intensifies the point – Halliday’s “they” matches, and subsequently revises, Castle’s interior vocabulary for reasoning about his role in the arrangement. As Castle’s nonplussed response makes clear, such reasoning had been an essential part of his life: “It came as a shock to Castle to realize how little he had been trusted even by those who had the most reason to trust” (217). Greene’s use of a passive formation (“It came as”) and syntax cluttered with prepositional forms slows the pace of the narration, communicating Maurice Castle’s feeling of shock, of the need to reorient his thinking. In the past, Castle had proceeded in every aspect of his carefully controlled public and private existences on the basis of a certain understanding of intermental perspective: Castle’s private, intramental image of the organization for which he works, and how it might view him.¹⁰⁰ With the new information provided by Halliday, “they” suddenly become at once more definite (Halliday is a member of the organization) and more nebulous (hence his avoidance of the familiar “they”), as Castle can no longer reason about them in familiar terms (what they know, whom they employ, where he stands in the institutional hierarchy).

⁹⁹ Alec Leamas, middle-aged spy protagonist of le Carré’s *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, is an obvious example (and one which Greene praised).

¹⁰⁰ Palmer would call this Castle’s “double cognitive narrative” of the KGB: This bit of jargon refers to the “versions of characters’ minds that exist within the minds of other characters” (88). The only difference here is that Castle represents the mind of a group, not that of an individual.

To return to an earlier thread of discussion: In this brief conversation between Halliday and Castle, Greene creates moments of irony that parallel those present in *The Secret Agent*. In Conrad's novel, as I demonstrated earlier, the pervasive sense of dual-voicedness, of perspectival conflict, arises from clashes between one character and another, or between character-voices and that of the personalized, authorial narrator. In *The Human Factor*, such moments of tension and surprise appear, but occur at a different narrative level. In the episode outlined above, the primary level of irony occurs at the level of plot (Castle's learning of a long-standing misapprehension), but the greater conflict occurs within Castle's mind, as one version (one "cognitive narrative," in Palmer's words) of the intermental (institutional) perspective of the KGB, the one on which Castle has based his actions, gives way to another (the mysterious, changed entity adumbrated by Halliday's utterances). In a spy novel "free from conventional violence," Greene's aspiration with *The Human Factor*, it seems fitting that the most high-stakes moments would take place in a purely interior setting; Conrad's London shops give way to a different sort of middle-class interior environ – Castle's mind.

IV. MI6: Institutional Perspective and Internal Games

With the tensions between Castle and his KGB employers now firmly in place, we can turn to the novel's deeper locus of tension – between Castle, his family, and the administrative perspective of MI6. Unpacking the latter perspective will mean first decomposing it into the viewpoints of the organization's two primary institutional representatives in *The Human Factor*: Sir John Hargreaves and Dr. Percival. The former, newly appointed as the head of MI6, precipitates the novel's primary action by initiating the pursuit of the agency's "leak." Sir John, somewhat older than the remainder of the novel's central characters, represents both a generational discontinuity and a familiar espionage-fiction archetype, the gentleman spy. Like

Buchan's Richard Hannay or Conrad's Assistant Commissioner, Hargreaves began his career as an administrator in Britain's African colonies (24). The influence of this early experience frames his understanding of domestic intelligence affairs to an almost comic degree, as when he remarks to Castle, "As I see it things are a bit like they were when I was a young man in West Africa. Watson is a sort of Provincial Commissioner and you are a District Commissioner..." (47). As a representative of the establishment "old boys" network, Hargreaves also stands out for his lack of domestic intelligence experience. As Daintry notes, "No one in the firm knew why he had been chosen – all kinds of recondite influences had been surmised, for his only experience of intelligence had been in Africa during the war" (24). In both his anachronistic mode of career advancement and his dated outlook on the administration of intelligence affairs, Hargreaves nearly resembles his monocle-wearing counterpart in Greene's earlier spy farce, *Our Man in Havana*, who sorely misjudges the inept James Wormold by applying to him the Kipling-era stereotype of the "merchant-adventurer" (*Our Man* 45).

Viewing Hargreaves (and the values he represents) solely through the lens of earlier spy archetypes, however, would mean eliding the complexity of Greene's portrait. Dated as aspects of the character are, Greene takes care to include aspects reflective of the political realities of late 1970s Britain. Despite beginning his career in the colonial service and possessing a knighthood, Sir John attains his princely lifestyle not through his own wealth, but rather via the inherited fortune of his American wife. During their shooting weekend at Hargreaves' estate, a jealous (and somewhat drink-addled) Daintry makes this point clear: "Daintry also envied him his wife; she was so rich, so decorative, so impeccably American. An American marriage, it seemed, could not be classified as a foreign marriage...to marry an American was perhaps to confirm the special relationship" (24). This last allusion frames Hargreaves' marriage in terms of the

economic and intelligence-sharing regime between the United Kingdom and United States. The sardonic note in the narrator's paraphrase of Daintry's thought further hints at the inequality at the heart of this intelligence-sharing dynamic, hinting that the SIS might be desperate to define itself by pleasing its transatlantic counterpart. Taken together, these hints suggest that Hargreaves aims and methods may be less traditional than his archaic outward appearance might lead readers to believe.

The "special relationship" to which Daintry alludes ramifies, further, into the policies that Hargreaves enforces. When assigning a reluctant Castle to work alongside Mueller, the South African security officer who years earlier threatened Castle and his family with prison, Hargreaves justifies his choice by asking, "Have you ever wondered, Castle, what would happen to the West if the South African gold mines were closed by a racial war? And a losing war, perhaps, as in Vietnam. Before the politicians have agreed on a substitute for gold. Russia as the chief source,"¹⁰¹ which then tellingly leads into the introduction of an operation called "Uncle Remus" sourcing directly from the White House (49). Uncle Remus, the operation to which he alludes, is a contingency plan for racial uprising, involving the use of nuclear weapons to defend the international gold market (and hence the stability of all international trade). In this respect, Sir John also recalls his predecessors in Conrad's novel, the Assistant Commissioner and Sir Ethelred, who work to hunt down a spy who has attempted to assault the Greenwich Meridian, which "defined London as the centre of nineteenth-century global capitalism" (Eyeington 120). However, where his predecessors worked to defend their empire from its center, Sir John

¹⁰¹ The reference to a gold standard in a novel set in 1978 is an anachronism, and one that probably reflects bad editing. Although the US switched to fiat currency in 1971, effectively ending the Bretton Woods System of fixed international exchange rates backed by gold, which had prevailed since the end of WWII, the bulk of *The Human Factor* was written in the 1960s. Greene mentions having put the manuscript aside in response to the publication of Kim Philby's authorized memoir *My Silent War*, as he didn't wish his story to be read as a roman-à-clef of his friend's time at MI6 (*Ways of Escape* 298).

Hargreaves, whom Wright identifies as the novel's supreme representative of the UK's "Establishment" class (94), acts to enforce the dictates of a newer empire. With the complexities of the forces acting upon Hargreaves' motives (class, nostalgia, the "special relationship") now defined, we may next turn to the modes of his actions – and that will involve a brief look into the other major institutional voice of MI6.

In contrast to the relatively nuanced (and generically deep) portrait Green provides of Sir John, his rendering of Dr. Percival is somewhat shallower. However, the details of both Percival's profession and his apolitical, operationalist mindset determine the contours of the MI6 perspective to which Castle responds. Although Percival began his career as a doctor, he has since fallen out of practice (43), and Castle identifies him as Hargreaves' primary liaison with the "bacteriological warfare people" (60). As a representative of the Cold War-era coopting of the sciences by the Military Industrial Complex, Percival trades in medical practice for the chance to work with and employ biological weapons, one of which he eventually uses to "eliminate" the wrongly suspected MI6 analyst Arthur Davis.¹⁰² And this emphasis on technical, operational efficiency overrides any moral considerations that might slow the novel's central act of violence, as demonstrated when an enthusiastic Percival frames his proposed internecine assassination as a "valuable" chance to field-test a new poison (79). However, Percival is not reducible to his medical attitudes; Greene also endows his primary antagonist with a distinct social perspective. Like Sir John – whom he serves as a confidant – Percival holds an elevated social position; the two take turns dining together at each other's elite central London social clubs, The Travellers and the Reform (75). The extreme height of Percival's social and

¹⁰² Percival's shift in career-track signifies a larger trend during the Cold War involving the redirection of medical resources and personnel into more tactical, government and strategy-directed work, though this had largely ended by the mid-1970s (Guillemin S45-6).

institutional positions, when wedded to the nihilistic indifference of his politics,¹⁰³ produces a stereoscopic effect of abstraction – the removal of moral particulars.

If the above statement seems somewhat obscure, we can shed light on it by looking to the novel's most famous (and widely cited) moment of visual analogy. On the evening of the shoot at the Hargreaves estate, after Sir John and Percival have unsuccessfully attempted to convince Daintry to cooperate in their scheme to “eliminate” the agency's “leak,” Percival makes a second effort at convincing the reluctant security officer, this time by referring to one of Lady Hargreaves' paintings:

‘Take a look at that Nicholson. Such a clever balance. Squares of different color. And yet living so happily together. No clash. The man has a wonderful eye. Change just one of the colors – even the size of the square, and it would be no good at all.’ Percival pointed at a yellow square. ‘There's your Section 6. That's your square from now on. You don't need to worry about the blue and the red. All you have to do is pinpoint our man and then tell me. You've no responsibility for what happens in the blue or the red squares. In fact not even in the yellow. You just report. No bad conscience. No guilt.’ (32-3)

Critics have seized upon Greene's moment of ekphrastic analogy: Stein identifies the painting as Nicholson's *Painting, 1937* and rightly sees it as offering (as does Percival) a vision of “human existence” that excludes “warmth, loyalty, and...communication” (Stein 177). Gaston, in his chapter on *The Human Factor*, adds to this the idea of the painting as mapping out the novel's plot-structure, a “rigid scheme of opposition which brings to mind the situation of the participants” (Gaston 127). Although both of these readings have their merits, they also neglect

¹⁰³ Elsewhere, Greene has Percival state this position more bluntly, unapologetic even in the face of having killed an innocent man. When an anxious Hargreaves worries that they may have killed an innocent man, Percival reassures him: “[Davis was] no loss to the firm, John. He was inefficient and careless and drank too much. Sooner or later he'd have been a problem anyway” (201-2)

the psychological and political *sources* of the vision analogized in the Nicholson painting. Nicholson's distant, abstract field of colored squares appeals to Percival because the latter's reasoning, his moral and political perspective, are determined by the twin optics outlined above: an emphasis on technical rationality over individual moral value, and a combined social and political distance from those involved in any given operation or interaction. Under this morally stereoscopic effect, individual ethical and legal considerations are abstracted away – leaving only a series of morally neutral variables – more chess pieces than individuals. And it is with these characteristics in mind, the abstracting move away from the personal implied by Percival's viewpoint, that we can at last turn to examine what I have called the MI6 perspective as a whole.

This collective viewpoint, embodied physically by Hargreaves and Percival, enfolds the values and flaws of both characters – combining an elevated and atavistic social vision with a destructively operation-focused emphasis on technical capability. Elaborated primarily during the shooting weekend at the Hargreaves estate and at the two prenominate London clubs, this perspective is also marked by mutual misunderstanding and a tendency to bureaucratic complexity. To underscore the distinctive nature of this intermental grouping, Greene crafts for it a conceptual idiolect – albeit a small one – that the novel's other main characters find incomprehensible. This incompatibility of language emerges most clearly when Hargreaves introduces to Daintry plans to kill the intra-office “leak”:

‘When we are quite certain he's our man, then it seems to me we will just have to eliminate him. No trial, no publicity. If we can get information about his contacts first, so much the better, but we mustn't risk a public flight and then a press conference in Moscow....’

‘Elimination? You mean...’

‘I know that elimination is rather a new thing for us. More in the KGB line or the CIA’s. That’s why I wanted Percival here to meet you. We may need the help of his science boys....(30)

Wright sees this moment as notable for the moral decline of the “Establishment” figure Sir John (Wright 94), but I would prefer to call attention to the language Hargreaves employs.

“Eliminate” catches Daintry by surprise first for its neologistic quality; he cannot fathom what such a term would mean. Hargreaves thus introduces to a more public audience a technical term formerly employed only by the private perspective shared between the agency’s two senior officers (what I am calling the MI6 perspective). This linguistic novelty sources from the insular, dyadic character of the MI6 perspective, which Percival and Hargreaves elaborate over a series of social-club conversations throughout the text.

The novelty of Hargreaves’s statement extends beyond the power of its language to confuse Daintry. The bemused security officer blanches also at the moral and procedural novelty implied by the idea of “elimination,” which would suspend procedural safeguards that characterize their shared institution. This latter contrast, between Daintry’s rule-governed rigidity and the blitheness of his superiors, points to a second aspect of the MI6 perspective – its insistence on viewing espionage (and institutional politics) as a game:

‘The trouble is,’ [Hargreaves] said, ‘that the situation *is* a bit like a rocky marriage. In a marriage, if the lover begins to be bored by the complaisant husband, he can always provoke a scandal. He holds the strong suit. He can choose his own time. I don’t want any scandal provoked.’

Daintry hated flippancy. Flippancy was like a secret code of which he didn't possess the book. He had the right to read cables and reports marked Top Secret, but flippancy like this was so secret that he hadn't a clue to its understanding. (27-8)

Hargreaves' somewhat glib analogy condenses the central features of the MI6 perspective. Grounded in Sir John's anachronistic sense of espionage as a sporting activity and Percival's amoral focus on technique, the most serious of security situations becomes – in this translation – a game. Aspects of both Hargreaves and Percival's personalities thus combine to add a layer of comic analogy, thus distancing those responsible from the severity of the matters being discussed. Daintry's putative incomprehension is similarly revealing. He does stand at a social remove from his superiors (making him less likely to adopt their flippant tone), but there's an element of will to this incomprehension: the presence of "secret" implies a mystery to be solved, something to which Daintry (as an investigator) ought to feel impelled to solve via ("clue[s]"), yet he refuses to look further, to countenance the amoral course being proposed by MI6's heads. This combination of umbrage and avoidance at their suggestions sets a pattern that the morally serious but professionally timid Daintry repeats throughout the novel; unwilling to adopt the idiosyncratic conceptual vocabulary of the intermental unit to which he reports.

Greene thus provides his primary institutional unit with its own, distinctive conceptual vocabulary. And before moving onto the higher-level dynamics of that intermental unit, we should pause to review its central features: A shared commitment to what Daintry interprets as "flippancy" (suspension of ordinary legal and ethical measures in the face of operational objectives), the idea of "elimination," and finally, the figure of the box. Introduced first during Percival's above-cited homily to Colonel Daintry, the box-metaphor serves as a guiding analogy, allowing its users to wall themselves off from moral responsibility, a condition "not of espionage

as an occupation, but of all activities sanctioned under its aegis” (Snyder 31). Boxes appear in the language of other figures, as well. When meeting with Castle, Boris explains his inability to communicate transparently via the same trope: ““But you know how it is in your own outfit. It’s the same in ours. We live in boxes and it’s they who choose the box”” (*THF* 115). Although Castle interprets this with the wry observation that both agencies “[share] the same clichés” (115), the parallel he intimates between the KGB and MI6 has serious consequences: shared metaphors suggest shared practices, shared visions of the aims and tactics of espionage. Percival’s use of the box-trope thus points to a growing structural and methodological alignment between the two institutions, one that Castle struggles to negotiate as the novel progresses.

With the major conceptual features of the MI6 mind now spelled out in some detail, we can next turn to the plot-level consequences that these features have within *The Human Factor*. Greene’s investigation of small-group psychology demands interest not just for its satirical power, but also for its more serious interrogation of how communication errors and misinterpretation can have devastating consequences, particularly when such errors occur within larger-scale institutional contexts. Greene’s account of the events leading to Davis’ death models the diffusion and decay of agentive processes and moral responsibility within a bureaucratic institution. To begin, key aspects of the decision to assassinate Davis originate from each man. Hargreaves introduces the idea of elimination at the shooting weekend, but the chosen method – the use of the peanut-based mold aflatoxin – comes from Percival at one of their club dinners (79). Thus, the idea of poisoning Davis with aflatoxin cannot be said to originate solely from either man, a classic instance of the extension of cognition.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ For a non-fictional example, see the case of cognitive scientist James Wertsch, who tells an anecdote about helping his young daughter find her shoes. When the child was unable to remember the location of the shoes by herself, Wertsch “posed questions that directed her recall until she ‘remembered’ where they were” (“Culture, Cognition, and Evolution”). Because Wertsch himself had no prior knowledge of the shoes’ location, the thinking

It is in the series of events that lead to the assassination, however, that Greene displays his most acute insights into the workings (and problems) of social minds and the institutions within which they operate. The notion of poisoning the suspected double-agent arises as a collective decision taken by the two men (Percival by himself wouldn't have authorized elimination, and Hargreaves has no knowledge of biochemistry), and therefore as attributable to their intermental unit (Palmer 43). However, the chain of subsequent choices – leading up to the act of poisoning itself – shows that initial unity of attitude, purpose, and cognition breaking down, piece-by-piece. At one of their Travellers Club luncheons, Sir John announces his impending visit to Washington and asks Dr. Percival to serve as his “deputy in this affair,” but chides him, “for god’s sake, Emmanuel, don’t do anything rash,” to which the latter assents eagerly (120).

If the functional portion of the MI6 mind manifests itself in agreement over a specialized set of words (“eliminate,” “leak,” “marked note,” “boxes”), then its malfunctioning arises from a disagreement over the idea of rashness, in this situation. Whereas Hargreaves apparently intended to await further confirmation, Percival acts immediately after his departure, justifying this alacrity via another gaming analogy, ““You left me in charge, John. When you feel the fish on the line you don’t stand waiting on the bank for someone else to advise you what to do”” (162-3). Satisfactory as this explanation might seem to Dr. Percival, it clearly bothers Sir John. Weeks later, when attempting to divert himself from work concerns by reading Anthony Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now*, in which he hopes to find “the sense of a calm Victorian world where good was good and bad was bad and one could distinguish easily between them” (189). Disquieted by his unexpected feelings of sympathy for the novel’s swindler antagonist,

involved in this act of recall cannot be bounded solely within the bodies of either Wertsch or his daughter; instead, they functioned as a cognitive system (intermental unit) [Palmer 43].

Melmotte, Hargreaves reflects on his own responsibility in the Davis case: “Perhaps I spoke hastily – I reacted stupidly – but it was Percival who eliminated him – I shouldn’t have left Percival in charge of the case....” (190). Though both men were clearly responsible for the formation of the initial notion for “elimination,” responsibility for the execution is less clear. Miscommunication, misinterpretation of intent between the two means that Percival acted in a manner inconsistent with Hargreaves’ intentions, yet the latter must still bear some blame.

In presenting the genesis and breakdown of the collective choice to take Davis’ life, Greene thus raises a distinctly contemporary ethical consideration, and one that updates Palmer’s initial formulation of the ethics of social minds. In his monograph on social minds, Palmer argues that a “fierce debate took place within the nineteenth-century novel...on the nature of social minds,” one side of which posed an ethical question: “To what purposes should our knowledge of other minds [and social minds] be put?” (Palmer 4). In his presentation of the intermental unit comprised by Hargreaves and Percival, and in detailing its gradual collapse, Greene poses a more modern variation of Palmer’s original question: Given that we accept the presence of social minds or intermental units, and particularly within the institutions that structure modern life, what happens when their connections decay, when the social-cognitive structures assumed by modern socio-political life break down for intrinsic reasons? And what might this say about moral responsibility within the institutional frameworks that shape nearly all large-scale decisions within developed, late twentieth-century societies? It should come as little surprise that Greene’s novel precedes by only two years the formalization of this problem by the political philosopher Dennis Thompson in his essay “The Problem of Many Hands.” “Because many different officials contribute in many ways to the decisions and policies of government,” Thompson writes, it has become difficult “even in principle to identify who is morally

responsible for political outcomes” (Thompson 905). Greene is no ethicist: *The Human Factor* offers no principled arguments toward solving Thompson’s problem. What he does offer, instead, is an extended examination of *how* such problems arise, even within relatively small and contained institutional space of MI6. And with these institutional problems now in place, we can next turn to the perspective that receives, interprets, and reacts against the movements of the MI6 mind, what Vološinov would call the novel’s answering voice (*M&PL* 102) – that of Maurice Castle.¹⁰⁵

VII. Castle’s Countervailing Voice

Although he only admits it to himself late in the novel,¹⁰⁶ Maurice Castle is also playing a game for much of *The Human Factor*. His extended double-agency, with its minute adjustments of behavior, concealment of intent, and constant anticipation of his employers’ perceptions and moves, has the structure of a game of chess.¹⁰⁷ And because he engages in this figurative game, Castle’s thoughts and actions come to mirror those of the Hargreaves-Percival unit, absorbing its tactics, and even its metaphors. As Snyder frames it, readers “admire the protagonist for his sincerity of purpose, yet it remains true that his desire for a hermetically compartmentalized life replicates the mentality of the institution to which he gives his divided allegiance” (Snyder 31). Like Dr. Percival’s explication of the Nicholson painting, the elaborate interior dialogue and careful routine which Castle runs through at the novel’s opening show his

¹⁰⁵ If *The Human Factor* moves toward any kind of description or understanding, it is a dialogic one, and as Vološinov points out, to understand another’s voice or words, we “lay down a set of our own answering words.” Interpreting another’s utterances, actions, and ideas means translating and speaking to them: “*Any true understanding is dialogic in nature....Understanding strives to match the speaker’s word with a counter word*” (102).

¹⁰⁶ Cornelius Muller describes another double agent, an excellent chess player who became bored and turned against his own side (194).

¹⁰⁷ The metaphor comes to him during a conversation with Daintry, in which the latter probes Castle for information about the leak: “After so many years of concealment [Castle] was beginning to enjoy this snake-and-ladder game” (210).

desire to sort aspects of his life into “boxes,” which also mirror the thinking and structure of the other, more obscure intelligence service for which Castle works. And it is by tracing out the details of and motives behind Castle’s deliberate engagement in this collective “game” that we can begin to unpack the underlying political stakes of Greene’s involuted narrative.

These echoes of Percival and Hargreaves’ duolect surface elsewhere in Castle’s interior monologue. Early in the novel, when Percival uses a social outing with Davis to plant a piece of misinformation, Castle catches the technique, referring to it by the same term used by Hargreaves and the Doctor: “...were they using an innocent Davis to pass him on a marked bank note?” (65). The anticipations, the anxieties, the relentless efforts to move in correspondence to his employers result naturally from Castle’s tenuous position as a double-agent, and they produce a concomitant desire to be totally absorbed in the system: “There were times, which grew more frequent with every year, when he dreamed of complete conformity, as a different character might have dreamt of making a dramatic century at Lord’s” (7). His success in this endeavor – indeed Castle’s double-agency only becomes clear halfway through the novel – stems from more than the ability to mimic the methods of his superiors. In his effort to conceal his inner life (the novel’s centermost “box”), Castle has help from the narrating voice itself.

By involving the narrating voice in the story-level deceptions of Maurice Castle, Greene adds to his spy narrative a layer of instability and complexity not present in Conrad’s spy stories of seven decades earlier. In *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad leaves no doubt as to the double-agency of his protagonists: Verloc’s work for the embassy becomes clear three pages into the former, and Razumov’s dependence on the tsarist police-apparatus motivates every action taken in the latter. Green, by contrast, forces his reader to cope with “a narrative that acts like a smokescreen,” obscuring the protagonist’s double-agency until nearly halfway

through the novel (Sedlak 36). And this process occurs largely because of modulations in narrative distance. To Castle's deliberate attempts to anticipate and avoid detection by his employers, the narration adds a layer of descriptive vagueness that clouds the reader's perceptions alongside them. Everyday events outlined early in the plot are later revealed to have a doubled significance. The anonymous late-night phone calls that frighten Castle's family (15) are revealed to be call-signals from his KGB handlers, and the books he purchases in sets of two turn out to be tools for book-code transmissions. An emblematic case of this narrative "smokescreening" occurs after Castle's visit to Halliday's shop in Book III:

"What are you doing?" Sarah asked. "Didn't you hear me call?"

She looked at the book on his desk and said, "*War and Peace*. I thought you were getting tired of *War and Peace*."

He gathered up a sheet of paper, folded it and put it in his pocket.

"I'm trying my hand at an essay."

"Show me."

"No. Only if it comes off"

"It's a very long time since you wrote anything. I'm glad you are starting again."

"Yes. I seem doomed always to try again." (91).

This brief dialogue comprises an entire chapter of the novel, thus foregrounding both its brevity and extreme informational paucity. The narrating voice provides no indication of time, location, or (beyond the dialogue) the objects involved. In Castle's sole narrated action, the voice pushes every involved noun to a greater level of abstraction: Castle becomes "He," and the (likely book-code message) on which he works becomes merely "a sheet of paper" – even the attached article is indefinite. Compare this moment to the relative wealth of detail that attends the narration of

Castle later in the novel as he transcribes a stolen document: “He sat down and made a careful copy of Muller’s notes. He didn’t even bother to type them. The anonymity of the typewriter, as the Hiss case indicated, was very partial and anyway he had abandoned that with his final message....” (174). Thus, by withdrawing at times from the near-omniscience it often displays elsewhere, the narrating perspective of *The Human Factor* frequently moves to place Greene’s reader in the same position as many of Castle’s bewildered observers.

This is not to say that Castle’s act of social disguise proceeds totally without outward hints. At key moments, the narrating perspective resumes its proximity to Castle’s. When he covers for Davis’ (innocent) absence from an MI6 meeting, Castle does so with regret: “He didn’t like being involved in other men’s lies: they complicated things” (68). The tone seems casual, but the deliberate insertion of “other men’s” intimates the existence of Castle’s own. In such moments, Greene adds to his espionage narrative a degree of complexity not present in its Conradian antecedents; he nests a story-level deception into a discourse or narrative-level effect, as if to implicate the storytelling frame itself in the political and institutional stakes of Castle’s story.

However depersonalized the narrative voice of *The Human Factor* might at times seem, these moments of modulation and selection also involve it – almost personally - in the events of Castle’s double-agent plot. The reasons for this multi-level narratorial entanglement become clearer in a later scene, when Castle relaxes his habitual restraint.

In this, one of the novel’s most revealing moments, Greene inserts a remark that signals the reasons behind the novel’s other moments of occlusion. In a conversation with Halliday, Castle lets a bitterly anti-American remark slip into ordinary conversation (“clean young Americans doing their duty...[as] Napalm bombers”), which the narrating voice follows with the

explanatory “[s]ometimes he found it impossible not to show one splinter of the submerged iceberg life that he led” (90). The placement of this somewhat coy bit of psycho-narration is obviously suggestive. Beyond hinting at the scope and political orientation of Castle’s hidden life, this off-hand remark would have had a certain resonance for Greene’s long-established readership. Castle’s disdain for “hygienic” young Americans echoes that of a more famous Greene protagonist – John Fowler.

Fowler, the narrator of *The Quiet American*, is a British journalist working in pre-independence Indochina, who also resents Americans for their smugness, sterility, and naïve expansionism. Like Castle, he finds himself trapped between opposing sides in the nascent Cold War, and eventually betrays the titular American spy not for reasons of ideology, but of conscience: to stop an anti-communist plan that would involve the massive loss of human life (Green, *TQA* 166). More importantly, in expressing these sentiments, both characters follow Greene’s own well-publicized political stance. In a 1963 letter for the *Sunday Times*, Greene wrote that Dien Bien Phu “marked virtually the end of any hope the Western Powers might have entertained that they could dominate the East....That young Americans continue to die in the Southern delta of Saigon only shows that it takes time for the echoes of even a total defeat to encircle the globe” (qtd in Adamson 123).¹⁰⁸ The moments of narratorial occlusion I outlined earlier, when taken in conjunction with the intertextual and biographical allusions contained in Castle’s hints, suggest the personal stakes of the hidden life that Castle leads. Where tracing his interactions with his superiors can provide us with a sense of the *form* of Castle’s role in the

¹⁰⁸ Greene’s own resentment for, and public conflicts with, the US government were notorious (and often funny). He famously referred to Americans as living “behind the cellophane curtain,” (Baldrige 41) and was publicly denied an entry visa by the Justice Department in the early 1950s, owing to his brief membership in the British Communist Party while at Oxford. Greene took some relish in embarrassing American officials, and, on several occasions, attempted to enter the US anyway (*Ways of Escape* 210-216).

game, the references conveyed in his verbal slips reveals the personal and moral *content* of this side of his life.

The resemblances between Castle and Fowler provide a starting-point for this inquiry. Both men claim to have “no politics,” and yet both are eventually forced into actions (involving political commitments) for reasons of conscience, partially deriving from personal romantic commitments (to a wife and a mistress, respectively); each betrays a Western intelligence agency to its Communist counterparts. But the similarities end there. Fowler, who remains largely aloof from the conflict he watches unfold, acts from a number of disjoint personal impulses: A dislike for the American support of Vietnamese anti-Communist forces, a romantic rivalry with the CIA operative Pyle, and horror at witnessing a botched bombing operation. These events drive Fowler to a single act of betrayal – providing Pyle’s location to a group of Viet Minh agents – but his associations with them carry no further, and, whatever political valences his actions may have are thus ephemeral, overridden by their roots in personal or ethical motives. Fowler’s decisions ramify into the political, but they begin and end as personal choices – Fowler betrays a friend, rather than a political commitment or institutional obligation. Maurice Castle may share a personal motive for his initial move to action – a debt to the South African communist who saved his wife from the South African Security police – but the details of his double-agency belie any further parallel to Fowler’s case. Castle feeds information to the KGB slowly, over a period of seven years, and engages in myriad, minute actions that come to structure his work and home lives in a rigid way. Fowler may act in a personal matter that has political consequences, but Castle’s extended game forces the personal aspects of his life into the domain of the political.

Thus the “game” of double-agency in which Castle engages involves his continual maintenance and adjustment of a public persona in response to the imagined pressure and

scrutiny of other minds, especially social groups. Most of Castle's interior life, as we see it, involves worries or conjectures about the potential knowledge or opinions of the influential groups that surround him: the social focus carries from the opening chapter's mention of "schoolmasters" (12), to his dreams of "perfect conformity" at MI6, and into the anxieties of unknowing that plague him after defection. Castle aims to present a public version of himself that would accord with the generalized preferences and judgments of such social minds, one in which the "intricate and messy detail of a life as it is lived by a particular individual is smoothed and flattened out into a simple story, a narrative that is molded according to the collective desire for a simple...tale" (Palmer 91). And Castle's unceasing focus on producing an armorially dull outer existence ramifies, of course, into the private existence that it works to shield.

By "private," I refer not only to the professional dimension of his secret, but also to the more closely guarded space of his intimate life with his wife Sarah, the root of Castle's double-agency, whose details are also inflected by his public engagements. Snyder and others have noted Castle's desire to dis sever public from private commitments: "Castle belief that he can compartmentalize his life, cleanly separating the personal from the political, harks back to an era when the heroes of late-Victorian adventure novels were not complicit in, or defined by, the causes they indirectly served" (Snyder 29). While this observation catches Castle's essential impulse to place differing domains of his life in boxes, it misses the language in which Greene frames Castle and Sarah's relationship. Castle may aim to divide rigidly his private life from his public one, but the vocabulary he deploys to describe that inner space suggests otherwise – their marriage is figured largely in espionage's trade terminology of secrets, codes, technology, nations, and loyalties.

Some usages are innocuous: Castle compares a prying Sarah to an “interrogator” (110). Elsewhere, though, Greene introduces a more telling pattern, one that reveals the stakes of Castle’s carefully guarded inner life: His name becomes part of a code, “Endearments...were everyday currency to be employed in company, but a name was strictly private, never to be uttered to a stranger outside the tribe” (63). The suggestion made by “tribe” expands elsewhere, into a nation; when Castle confesses his double-agency – calling himself a “traitor” - Sarah dismisses the public commitment for a different loyalty: “‘Who cares?’ she said....’We have our own country. You and I and Sam. You’ve never betrayed that country, Maurice” (188). And with this framing in mind – of Castle’s marriage as an entity comparable to the public interests he serves – the style of his commitment, the pattern of actions it induces, becomes more comprehensible. As does another allusion to *The Secret Agent*: “[Castle]’s love of Sarah had led him to Carson, and Carson finally to Boris. A man in love walks through the world like an anarchist carrying a time bomb” (138). The last sentence equates Castle with the Professor, Conrad’s nihilistic, bomb-toting chemist, and a man who builds bombs in order to exterminate what he terms “the multitude.” These are “The weak! The source of all evil on this earth!” – the mass of humanity that surrounds him, leaving only himself [“I remain – if I am strong enough”] (Conrad, *The Secret Agent* 239-40). Castle’s loyalties, though directed toward a dyad rather than an individual, are no less potentially destructive to the social multitudes that surround him nine decades later.

This catalogue of intimate metaphors thus reveals more than Castle’s fondness for euphemism. The escalating pattern of the associations, increasing in seriousness from off-hand associations to personal avowals, and later to political commitments, reveal the seriousness of the terms within which Castle reasons about Sarah. In his public-inhabiting life as a double

agent, Castle negotiates both a world of institutional facts and, more significantly, the collective groupings and social minds that shape and decide within those institutions. By framing his intimate life in the same terminology that suffuses his (extremely dangerous) public existence, Castle conjures a personalized intermental dyad to match against and counterbalance the political ones against which he contends, such as Hargreaves and Percival. Castle elevates the personal into the more formalized space of the political not just by the force of his commitment, but also because, for him, the two domains are in an important sense, structurally the same.

VIII. Self-Creating Voice

Maurice Castle's attempts to paint his personal life in the language of espionage point to one of Greene's central themes in this late novel, though one that only emerges if we look deeper still into the private life limned above: The gradual association developing between Maurice Castle and authorship, writing, and Greene's biography. The terms of this association become clearer if we refer back to another of those moments of intimate spycraft. When Sarah and Sam leave for the last time (Castle's having been exposed as the leak), Greene inserts a suggestive remark by the narrating voice: "At the taxi they even forgot to kiss and then clumsily remembered – a kiss which was meaningless, empty of everything except the sense that his going away couldn't be true – it was something they were dreaming. They had always exchanged dreams – those private codes more unbreakable than Enigma" (199). Notable first is the obvious intersubjectivity of the moment – an experience that only exists in being shared ("they...forgot," "they were dreaming"). So, too, the somewhat paradoxical formulation of dreams as "private codes" that remain shareable nevertheless. However, the explicit mention of "Enigma" stands out, as both a famously difficult code and one that was nonetheless broken by the same intelligence apparatus which Castle attempts to evade, hinting at the incompleteness of his own

encrypted “codes.” Dreams thus represent for Maurice Castle another layer of private experience, occluded from the commitments of his public life, and providing him a last guarantee of individuality, however incomplete.

Following the definition of dreams as a private material to be decoded leads us back to Greene’s own biography. After a series of suicide attempts, the adolescent Greene was sent by his parents to live and receive treatment for several months at the clinic of the psychoanalyst Kenneth Richmond. This was a tremendously influential experience for the young Greene. He kept a dream diary for years afterward, and showed a particular fascination with dream analysis, which he believed would allow him “to discover the long road back to myself” (*A Sort of Life* 100-102). He speaks also of “the excitement of the search” – the detective-work involved in decoding dream-images that contain bits of “true” self, a deeper source of subjectivity. Castle’s view of dreams as a secret spy’s code thus echoes in more dramatic form Lacan’s assertion that “the unconscious is structured like a language”; in both cases, dreams have a linguistic structure that holds within it a kind of deeper source of subjectivity, a non-public self, accessible only to those with the ability to read it.

With this emphasis on reading in mind, it comes as little surprise that Greene makes his protagonist also the novel’s central literary figure, its best reader. Other characters read and decode, to be sure: Halliday sells books, Hargreaves escapes from the shame of Davis’ botched elimination by reading Trollope, and Davis himself mediates his love for his secretary by annotating and memorizing lines of Browning (139). But only with Castle are the associations constant. Greene surrounds Castle with images and associations that involve both reading and literary creation. He transmits secret messages encoded using editions of *Clarissa* and *War and Peace*, poses as an anti-apartheid author while living in South Africa, and reads to Sam nightly

from Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verse* (a staple of Greene's own childhood). On her worst nights, he comforts Sarah by helping her to decode – and thereby vitiate – her nightmares (174-5). All this reading, however, brings with it a concomitant desire for expression, which for Castle proves somewhat more difficult.

Limited by both the Official Secrets Act and the obvious dangers of his role as “mole,” Castle's desire for expression, for expurgation, leads him to view his KGB handler as a kind of confessor, and to attempt the real thing. At one point, a desperate Castle attempts to confess to Catholic priest. The desperate grasp at communication fails, however, when his would-be confessor learns that Castle is not a Catholic, telling him instead: “I think what you need is a doctor” (184). Because he is unable at the level of story to voice the contents of his own “iceberg life,” the contents of Castle's secret existence leak out into the world of the text in other ways. To preface what I have in mind, we should look to Conrad's other double-agent protagonist, Razumov of *Under Western Eyes*. A conservative Russian university student in the late nineteenth century, Razumov finds himself drawn unwillingly into the world of anarchist politics, and is forced to serve as a double-agent for the tsarist government. Apart from their divided loyalties, Castle and Razumov have little in common. Frank Kermode's ingenious reading of *Under Western Eyes*, however, points to another, less overt parallel. When Razumov, who copes with his difficult situation by writing essays and transmitting messages back to St. Petersburg, finds himself unable to write, a strange thing occurs: expressions “private to Razumov....evidence as to his particular psychological state...[bleeds] into the texture of the book” itself. This “bleeding” takes the form of “key words,” images connected to black and

white: “a large number of allusions...to blackness and whiteness, paper and ink, snow and shadow” (Kermode 149-50).¹⁰⁹

Separate though their situations may be, the forcibly muted Castle also finds himself surrounded by a field of black and white. At the novel’s moments of greatest emotional intensity, Greene’s palette shifts to contrasts of black and white. When awaiting an emergency telephone call at Daintry’s daughter’s wedding reception, Castle looks out helplessly at the room around him: “Castle sat down at the edge of the great white bed, and the white owl glared at him beside the white telephone as if it recognized him as an illegal immigrant who had just perched on the edge of this strange continent of snow – even the walls were white and there was a white rug under his feet...fear poured like an invisible gas from the mouth of the silent telephone” (133). The unbroken white field of the bedroom matches the silence of the telephone – both accentuating Castle’s feeling of mute impotence – unable either to speak or to act. Later, the contrasting shades resurface in the scene that motivates Castle to betray himself completely. When reading to Sam from the Stevenson collection, Castle sees his son growing increasingly brutal as the result of ill-treatment at school. This sense, combined with his knowledge of the danger of Uncle Remus, fills Castle with dread: “Sam had never looked more black, Castle thought. He put his arm round him with a gesture of protection, but he couldn’t protect him from the violence and vengeance which were beginning to work in the child’s heart” (174). In both cases, the textual proxies of black and white appear at moments when Castle’s physical voice disappears, and which in turn spur him to other attempts at controlling his fate.

The most striking of these moments, and one that adds to the novel’s theme of blackness tonalities of racial and economic concern, occurs in the scene that drives Castle to (as he puts it)

¹⁰⁹ The imagistic parallels extend further: Like Razumov, Castle also finds himself haunted by ghosts – of Davis, and later of his first wife, Mary.

“go too far” – Muller’s description of the Uncle Remus Plan. In this strategy, designed with the assent of the US and Western European governments, the apartheid government would use nuclear weapons to fight off a potential black uprising in South Africa and protect supplies of gold and uranium (156-7). The name itself is semantically charged, for two reasons: First, its obvious allusion to Joel Chandler Harris’ *Uncle Remus*, a collection of American slave fables narrated by the stereotypical title character and written as a defense of “romantic beauty” of the American Slave system (Bernstein 134). Second, Greene’s Uncle Remus has a real-world parallel in Henry Kissinger’s “Tar Baby Option,” a foreign policy stratagem whereby the Nixon administration (despite maintaining public opposition to racial inequality) made a “carefully planned tilt” toward supporting oppressive white minority governments in South Africa and Rhodesia (Walton 270). These two semantic valences, with their combined overtone of institutionalized violence against black people, now in place, we may turn to the similarly charged exchange between Castle and Muller.

After the two men enter a muted debate about the reasoning behind Uncle Remus and its potential outcomes, Muller makes an offer:

Cornelius Muller took off his gold-rimmed glasses and polished the gold till it gleamed. He said, “I hope your wife liked her shawl. You know you will always be welcome to come back now that we realize your true position. With your family, too, of course. You may be sure they will be treated as honorary whites.”

Castle wanted to reply, “But I am an honorary black,” but this time he showed a little prudence. “Thank you.” (157)

Greene’s pattern of image-saturation reproduces textually the rhetoric of Muller’s argument for Uncle Remus. Gold predominates (“gold-rimmed glasses,” “polished the gold till it gleamed”),

and in the following lines (“[Muller] produced a ball-point pen – gold again”), the repeated alliterative clusters (gold/glasses, gold/gleamed, gold/again) accumulating to bury phonologically the dialogue’s single, unvoiced, mention of “black,” a black which earlier in their conversation conjured for Castle an image of his son killed by a nuclear accident (155). Unable to speak (and thus defend his black family) against the institutional logic Muller invokes, Castle turns again to white, to the unmarked page – copying by hand Muller’s notes for his Soviet handlers. In England, the repeated motifs of black and white cluster around moments when Castle expresses personal agency; however, circumstances (and colors) soon change their meanings.

In the final segment of *The Human Factor*, after Castle’s escape to the Soviet Union, Greene reverses the pattern set before. Dreams and textuality, the indicators of Castle’s autonomy, his existence independent of institutions, redound against him. The colors are the first to go. Isolated in Moscow, unable to see his family, Castle finds himself dependent on the charity of his KGB handlers, whom he grows to resent. Frustrated during one conversation, he gazes into the snow-filled street: “This was not the snow he remembered from childhood and associated with snowballs and fairy stories and games with toboggans. This was a merciless, interminable, annihilating snow, a snow in which one could expect the world to end” (254). The blank helplessness of Daintry’s wife’s bedroom is replaced here by an overwhelming whiteness that hints at a nuclear winter (“in which one could expect the world to end”). The creeping note of pessimism intimated there comes to infect Castle’s dreams, too.

Earlier in the novel, Greene’s narrator makes a passing mention of one of Castle’s deepest secrets, perhaps his most private information: the details of his abbreviated first marriage. When asked by his mother why he had never had children with Mary, his first wife,

Castle deflects the question, but remembers: “He had learned early in the marriage that he was sterile, so there was no child, but they were happy. It was as much an only child as a wife who was blown to pieces by a buzz bomb in Oxford Street...He had failed to protect her, and he hadn’t died with her. That was why he never spoke of her even to Sarah” (108-9). Castle’s layers of privacy deepen: Not only has he kept his infertility from his mother, but also from his wife (who earlier in the novel asks him why they haven’t had a child of their own). The narrator’s free-indirect language captures the depth of the trauma and guilt that surround this death: The “only child...blown to pieces” by the bomb is Castle, who reacts by building further levels of secrecy within himself, hiding Mary away. Yet she resurfaces in Moscow. While Castle waits near his phone, he dreams “as he had not dreamt for a dozen years, of his first wife. In his dream they quarreled as they had never done in life” (258). In this moment, the chaos brought on by his professional move to Moscow invades the most nested and closely guarded aspects of his private life – a penetration that portends the novel’s encroaching final moment of dramatic irony.

Near the novel’s end, Castle receives a visit from his handler, Boris, who arrives with the news that Maurice will not be reunited with his family as promised. Although this news upsets Castle more, the KGB agent includes another detail more important for present purposes, when he unveils the purpose of Castle’s extended double-life.

“You have never been given the real picture, have you? Those bits of economic information you sent us had no value in themselves at all.”

“Then why...?”

“...Let me try to explain. Your people imagined they had an agent in place, here in Moscow. But it was we who had planted him on them. What you gave us he passed back to them. Your reports authenticated him in the eyes of your service, they could check

them, and all the time he was passing them other information which we wanted them to believe. That was the real value of your reports. A nice piece of deception.” (261)

Here Castle learns two things: First, that his “selfless” actions over the past seven years, in the name of helping his South African friends in their struggles against apartheid, served no such function. Second, and more devastating, that the elaborate efforts of deception and negotiation that have characterized his life in his period of double-agency, have come to naught. Castle has spent years navigating between cynical institutions, outwardly working within the frames of their organizational voices while inwardly (he believed) preserving his own; but Boris’ revelation inverts that dynamic. What Castle thought to be the expression of his individual perspective or goals had actually been inflected all along with the operational tonalities of just such a cynical institution.¹¹⁰ The dream-decoding, the text-mediated self-creation, the elevation of his intimate relations into something quasi-political – all these careful efforts at maintaining internal autonomy are revealed to have been useless, pretensions. The entire time Castle worked so carefully to construct a limited, individualized life, he was in fact enmeshed in the grip of a more sophisticated social mind, embedded within a set of institutional conditions which he could not even detect.

This last realization brings us back to *The Secret Agent*. Conrad’s novel concludes in what Eagleton terms “a series of mutually cancelling moves”: Verloc and Winnie are both dead, the careerist bureaucrats see their plans frustrated, and even the irrepressible Professor is swallowed by “a street full of men” – the teeming multitude he so detests (Conrad, *SA* 246).

Where Conrad’s novel ends in a message of measured skepticism toward the viewpoints

¹¹⁰ Reconsider, for example, the moment when Boris (Castle’s KGB control) talks him out of resigning by invoking the same phrase Castle desires to say to Muller: ““Yes, if course, but we can’t lose you yet – because of Uncle Remus. As you put it, you’re a naturalized black now”” (117).

expressed, Greene's later narrative represents a more pessimistic vision. Conrad balances individual voices against one another; Greene extinguishes them. Castle's progress is ghosted by a narrative voice that at once mirrors and exceeds the complexity of his own perspective, alternately sympathizing with him, intimating the fault-lines in his reasoning, and revealing the vastly larger structures within which both are enmeshed. In a late modern society whose institutions have grown so pervasive and reflexive, and whose governing social minds so inscrutable, Greene's novel argues, there is no longer any language for the individual voice to stand against the collective, or even work authentically within it. Hence its last line: "[Sarah] said, 'Maurice, Maurice, please go on hoping,' but in the long unbroken silence which followed she realized that the line to Moscow was dead" (268).

CHAPTER FOUR

“Not a Closed System”: Self-Consciousness, Institutional Politics, and the Baroque Postmodern in *The Pale King*

I. Introduction

Early in his 1968 science-fiction novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, Philip K. Dick includes a scene in which his protagonist, the bounty hunter Rick Deckard, experiences a moment of cognitive panic. Hired to track and kill a number of androids manufactured by the Rosen Corporation, he finds himself entrapped by two of the company’s representatives who claim to have debunked his android test (the primary tool of Deckard’s profession):

He could not make out, even now, how the Rosen Association had managed to snare him, and so easily. Experts, he realized. A mammoth corporation like this – it embodies too much experience. It possesses in fact a sort of group mind. And Eldon and Rachel Rosen consisted of spokesmen for that corporate entity. His mistake, evidently, had been in viewing them as individuals. It was a mistake he would not make again. (Dick 473)

This terror, as it turns out, is short-lived. Deckard recovers only a moment later, proving that his test still works. In terms of the plot this is a brief moment of suspense. I want to linger, however, over the type of anxiety Deckard experiences. In a novel focused primarily on questions of the distinction between human minds and those of self-aware machines, this instant seems out of place. It shows Dick expressing a rare worry over the tension between those individual minds and the larger social forces that produce them; even the syntax seems turned around: Rachel and

Eldon “[consist] of spokesmen,” as if these corporate representatives themselves stand in for legions of unseen lower-ranking workers within the Rosen Association, as if the nascent self-consciousness of the novel’s titular androids weren’t the only form of doubling or self-awareness worth considering. For Dick, these concerns remain largely in the background, but they provide a useful window into a later novel which references *Androids* in part to take up the sorts of questions Dick leaves tacit.

That novel, David Foster Wallace’s *The Pale King*, was left unfinished at the time of the author’s death in 2008 and published by his longtime editor, Michael Pietsch, in 2011. Framed partly as a “non-fictional memoir,” *The Pale King* is set primarily in and around an IRS Regional Examination Center in the Illinois of 1985. Where Dick’s protagonist spends much of his time hunting down sentient machines and has only glancing encounters with the large-scale corporate institutions that have produced them, Foster Wallace’s novel takes place almost entirely *within* the physical and social space of one such institution, following employees who spend their time pondering their place within this corporate entity. In addition, these events are shadowed by an internecine conflict over the meaning and purpose of the IRS. This battle pits traditionalists led by Dewitt Glendenning, who see the Service as an instrument of civic virtue, against the “progressive” pro-market forces led by Systems director Merrill Lehl, who view the IRS as an organ of market forces (82-3). Not only does Lehl’s faction eventually prevail, but most of the novel’s central examiners are rendered obsolete by new “thanatoid” computer technology (80n19). In a sense, Wallace’s examiners experience more realistic and low-tech versions of the problems Deckard encounters, and this concretizing movement carries over to the novel’s narrative style and thematic concerns, as Wallace provides not just a glimpse of an institution’s representatives, but aims to represent the “mammoth” entity itself.

In the essay that follows, I will argue that in *The Pale King*, Wallace creates a series of textual complexities and reticulations that can be described as baroque. Starting at the lowest level of his character-narrators, Wallace introduces repeated motifs of doubling, mirrors, interconnection, and meta-awareness. These textual doublings extend across boundaries both narrative and institutional. The novel's primary narrative voice (a fictionalized version of the author), finds himself drawn in as a character, and eventually absorbed by both the story and the social structure it attempts to represent. In a more narrowly diegetic sense, these character and narrator-mirrorings are matched by the emergence of large-scale meta-awareness within the IRS itself, a movement of self-consciousness that poses the text's central ethical and political questions about the nature of citizenship and political obligation.

As noted above, I will attempt to explicate each of Wallace's major fictional strategies by appeal to the notion of the baroque, and particularly to the philosopher Gilles Deleuze's specialized sense of the term as developed in his book *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, a retooling of the art-historical concept that allows him to connect Leibniz's philosophy and mathematics to the postmodern moment of the late twentieth century, a moment with which Wallace is also deeply concerned. If, following Deleuze, we mobilize the conceptual trope of the fold (more on this later), then the novel's myriad textual doublings and interconnections that crisscross narrative and organizational strata, become clearer as conceptual moves. I will argue that the central doublings and recursions of Wallace's novel constitute the folds that Deleuze describes, iterated moments of tension and inwardness that allow Wallace to link individual concerns to narrative ones, and eventually to institutional and political matters. Ultimately, I will argue, Wallace found himself unable to escape from the postmodern style of his forbears (Barth

and Pynchon, most notably),¹¹¹ and so instead moves in *The Pale King* to inaugurate a baroque moment within that same postmodern fiction, a form of metafictional voice that attempts not so much to escape the trappings of metafictional technique as to turn its self-reflexive tools on the interconnections between individuals and larger systems.

II. Some Semi-Useful Background on the Baroque

The term “baroque” has several different sources. It derives partly from the Portuguese *barroco*, a term denoting an irregular pearl. Wellek, citing Benedetto Croce, points us to a more textual usage of the term, which named a form of logical fallacy (Wellek 77). Genette, describing the reaction to a baroque epic poem, cites the seventeenth-century critic Nicolas Boileau, who described its style as “the work of a madman”¹¹² (“Structures narratives” 42). In the same vein, art historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries then imported the term as a means of denigrating seventeenth-century architecture and painting whose ornate style offended their classical sensibilities (Lambert 112-3). Jakob Burkhardt eventually established an accepted historical meaning of baroque as referring to “what he considered the decadence of the High Renaissance in the florid architecture of the Counter-Reformation of Italy, Germany and Spain” (Wellek 77). As Wellek concludes his essay by noting, it seems impossible to give an exact definition of the baroque in terms of either chronology or a determinate set of features.

My interest in the baroque, however, has little to do with questions of totalizing conceptual definition or periodization. Instead, I want to follow the French art historian Henri

¹¹¹ I’ll avoid providing an extensive definition of this term, as Wallace’s oedipal engagement with these earlier authors has been so thoroughly explicated (see Staes or Boswell [“Author Here”]). For now, a working definition of “postmodern fiction” should be taken as something along the lines of fiction that focuses on ontological (rather than epistemological questions) about the nature of fictional worlds and their bearing on the external world [McHale 10].

¹¹² “*ce poème est l’œuvre d’un fou*” (translation mine).

Focillon who, in his 1934 text *The Life of Forms in Art*, argues that each artistic style “passes through several ages and several phases of being”: experimental, classical, refined, and (finally) baroque (Focillon 10). On this reading, rather than referring to a single, historically discrete group of artworks, “baroque” names a phase of evolution through which every artistic style and wider culture will pass.¹¹³ Focillon does, however, adumbrate the general formal features of this “most emancipated” phase: Baroque forms abandon “propriety” and instead “live with passionate intensity a life that is entirely their own; they proliferate like some vegetable monstrosity. They break apart even as they grow; they tend to invade space in every direction, to perforate it, to become as one with all its possibilities” (12). To these diffuse and organic qualities Focillon adds an intriguing note on form: in the baroque, “the confusion between form and sign never becomes more complete” – baroque, this final phase, also represents art at its most self-conscious, most anxious about its own origins (12). And it is this final note of reflexivity, of an energy beginning to turn back upon itself, that points us to Deleuze.

For him, the scattershot grouping of formal and thematic conditions that Focillon outlines above can be condensed into a single trope: the fold. The baroque, he writes, names not a set of artistic practices or historical conditions, but rather an “operative function”:

It endlessly produces folds. It does not invent things: there are all kinds of folds coming from the East, Greek, Roman, Romanesque, Gothic, Classical folds....Yet the Baroque trait twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other.

¹¹³ Tom Conley expands on this usefully: “‘Baroque’ designates a trope that comes from the renewed origins of art and has stylistic evidence that prevails in culture in general. Under its rubric are placed the proliferation of mystical experience, the birth of the novel, intense taste for life that grows and pullulates, and a fragility of infinitely varied patterns of movement” (x).

The Baroque fold unfurls all the way to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other.

(Deleuze, *The Fold* 3)

Having defined the baroque in terms of the abstract function of the fold, Deleuze is able to link not only painting, architecture, and music, but mathematical physics (Huygens) and philosophy (Leibniz's monadology). To the generalized operation of folding or pleating, however, Deleuze adds a second central feature:

the Baroque differentiates its folds in two ways, by moving along two infinities, as if infinity were composed of two stages or floors: the pleats of matter and the folds in the soul. Below, matter is amassed according to a first type of fold, and then organized according to a second type, to the extent that its part constitutes organs that are 'differently folded and more or less developed.' (3)

For Leibniz, the baroque (as folded, as picturing a divided world) represents an attempt to capture the mind's workings in a world after the collapse of faith in human reason that motivated the resurgence of interest in classical artistic forms and science during the Renaissance (Dimakopoulou). In its wake, he argues, the baroque period sees reason attempting to reconstitute itself via foldings and involutions (the signs of nascent self-consciousness), a motive force that results in both the ornate and grotesque aesthetics that Focillon ascribes to baroque visual art *and* to the intense self-reflexivity of baroque philosophy and literature. Although the fold has numerous applications to different aspects of the baroque world (which Deleuze explains at length), I would like merely to note the two main features established thus far: a continual trope of self-awareness or doubling (folding), along with the vision of a bifurcated world – albeit one in which the division between physical and mental remains obscurely

connected. With these two main features at least indicated, we can next turn to the somewhat steadier ground of the baroque's literary incarnations.

At the risk of oversaturating definitions, we should include another notion of the baroque, one that stands out for its provenance. In his preface to *A Universal History of Iniquity*, Jorge Luis Borges provides his own account of the term: "I would define the baroque as that style that deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its own possibilities, and that borders on self-caricature....I would venture to say that the baroque is the final stage in all art, when art flaunts and squanders its resources" (qtd in Lambert 112-3). Borges, whose writing had a life-long influence on Wallace but was especially important around the time the latter wrote *The Pale King*,¹¹⁴ poses a question for a literary account of the baroque: what, in prose form, does such "exhaustion" look like? For a useful answer, we may turn to theorist Gregg Lambert, whose 2004 monograph *The Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture* identifies the "baroque design" with "the figural device of the *mise-en-abyme* ('the picture within the picture' or 'the text within the text')" (Lambert 4). For Lambert, who models his account on Foucault's reading of Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, this trope shows the literary attempting to incorporate what Barthes calls "principle of intertextuality," and thereby account for its own status as representing object (4). In a simple sense, this intertextuality might, as Borges suggests, manifest as parody; however, the *mise-en-abyme* may take other forms.

For a more historically informed account of how this trope manifests itself in narrative, and in ways that prove particularly relevant for the present analysis, we should turn to an example on which both Lambert and Deleuze lean heavily: Gérard Genette's reading of Saint-

¹¹⁴ He wrote a review of Edwin Williamson's biography, *Borges: A Life* for the *New York Times* in late 2004, when he would have also been deeply immersed in early drafts of the novel. Max also notes that Wallace chose the Frank Bidart poem ("Borges and I") that serves as the novel's epigraph (Max 257).

Amant's long poem *Moses Saved* (*Moyse sauvé*). Near the end of his narratological analysis of Saint-Amant's elaborate and metaleptic reworking of the biblical story of the infant Moses, Genette introduces the characteristics of baroque narration: "amplification, proliferation of episodes and descriptive ornaments, multiplication of narrative levels and a play on this multiplicity, ambiguity, and interference shared between the represented and its representation, between the narrator and his narration... simultaneous search for an 'open form' and for symmetry" (*Figures II*, 222; qtd in Lambert 92). Each of these features has its counterpart in postmodern narrative, and in *The Pale King*, in particular: maundering digressions ("amplification"), embedded narratives, and continual interference of the narrator in his narration (and Wallace's metafictional references extend far beyond anything available to Saint-Amant).

Most interesting of all, however, is a term that Genette nearly elides – the mention of "symmetry" tucked away at the end of his sentence. He elaborates in a lengthy footnote, explaining that, beneath the apparent chaos of *Moyse sauvé*'s main plotline, there exists a hidden symmetry formed by the grouping of the embedded narratives and digressions, which forms the figure of a triptych [a central panel with a wing (*volet*) on each side] (Genette n59), as the embedded narratives create their own "rhythm" (Genette 42). More than a mere stylistic novelty of Saint-Amant's text, Genette continues, this image indicates something profound about baroque narrative: "The baroque is known for introducing movement into the plastic arts and architecture: does it mediate, in a more secret manner still, to hide symmetry beneath the movement? It is at least as the analysis of this récit suggests, the form of which is, almost perfectly, a mirror image" (qtd in Lambert 95). Here, buried in the middle of his footnote, Genette isolates a striking aspect of baroque narration, and one that can bring us back to the twentieth century: Beyond the frenetic surface folds of digressions and pictures-within-pictures,

baroque narrative contains an inner symmetry, a hidden unity among apparently disjointed parts, and one capable of connecting figures and stories across different levels of narration. With these main formal features (*mise-en-abyme*, metalepsis, self-reference, and embedded symmetry) at last in place, we can turn to Wallace's own folded narrative.

III. Doubling, Recursion, and Images of Self

The Pale King reproduces aspects of self-reference at every level of its narration. At the lowest level, the embedded stories of individual examiners, Wallace follows two figures for whom self-knowledge and meta-representation constitute psychological problems: Claude Sylvanshine and David Cusk. Although both figures struggle to cope with problems of meta-awareness and self-control, their difficulties diverge along two distinct lines: for Sylvanshine, the consequences are primarily mental; for Cusk, physical. Other character-narrators do appear, later in the text, for whom meta-awareness proves more manageable, but for now I wish to focus on the contained and low-order struggles of Wallace's most epistemically occluded figures.

The first, a low-level personnel employee named Claude Sylvanshine, simply cannot organize the torrents of data within which he lives and works. Wallace provides several reasons for this, but the most salient of them emerges in Chapter 15: Sylvanshine is a "fact psychic"; or more accurately, suffers from "Random-Fact Intuitions" wherein his thoughts are interrupted continually by mental torrents of totally irrelevant data (118). The only narrating figure to condense this adequately is the voice of Ch. 15:

The fact psychic lives part-time in the world of fractious, boiling minutiae that no one knows or could be bothered to know even if they had the chance to know. The population of Brunei. The difference between mucus and sputum. How long a piece of gum has

resided on the underside of the third-row fourth-from-the-left seat of the Virginia Theater, Cranston, RI, but not who put it there or why. Impossible to predict what facts will intrude. Constant headaches....Overwhelming (120-1)

Random Fact Intuitions such as the above (“How long...” “The population”) comprise one of *The Pale King*’s central narrative innovations, and Andrew Warren points to why: In them “we are given a character – and, allegorically, an author or narrative voice – exposed to pure, threatening Outside without any order or meaning. Any fact, any utterance, any connection between characters is possible” (Warren 399). And this steady torrent of entropic low-level information renders the fact-psychic unable to reflect on himself or his tasks in a controlled way. Blinded by the force of his own (admittedly unwanted) perceptual apparatus, Sylvanshine lives up to his name.¹¹⁵

Sylvanshine’s debilitating ESP dispossesses him of even his thoughts, rendering him occluded from that which he should own most intimately, not just monadic, but an animal variety of monad – distanced from its own reason – yet Wallace provides a more interesting path for Sylvanshine’s lost thoughts. Deleuze’s description of Beckett’s Malone comes to mind: “Malone is a naked monad, or almost naked, scatterbrained, degenerate, whose zone of clarity is always thinking, and whose body folds upon itself, its requisites always escaping him. It’s hard for him to tell what remains in his possession...what belongs to him only partially, and for what duration of time. Is he a thing or an animalcule?” (*The Fold* 109). Sylvanshine’s psychic problems are less extreme than those of Beckett’s isolated narrator, true: he can separate his own thoughts from intrusions and has unambiguous possession of his own body. But the Malone comparison points

¹¹⁵ “Sylvanshine” refers to the (often blindingly) bright reflection emanating from water or snow on the petals or leaves of certain plants (Fraser 4539). Think of the effect car headlights have on snow-covered trees at night.

us in useful directions. As Andrew Kennedy notes, Malone frequently crosses narrative levels, even going so far as to view himself as the creator of Beckett's other characters (qtd on Richardson 97).

While Sylvanshine's RFIs permit nothing so radical as Malone's narrative taking-of-the-wheel, they do perform one striking feat of narrative level-jumping (metalepsis), one that suggests submerged connections between the novel's various plotlines. In Chapter 15, Sylvanshine intuits a random fact: "That the pioneer of pullable consumer luggage was the ex-husband of a People's Express stew who'd spent over eighteen months driving himself almost insane trying to research luggage manufacturing specs and pending patent applications because he couldn't believe no one had thought of mass-marketing this feature already" (120). The datum intuited here matches a detail from Chapter 24, when the author-narrator recalls walking through a parking lot carrying unwheeled luggage: "...while carrying two suitcases (this was a couple years before the sudden advance of someone in the luggage industry realizing that suitcases could be fitted with little wheels and telescoping handles...)" (258). Most strikingly, Sylvanshine's psychic intuition comes not from the mind of the diegetic David Wallace of 1985, but rather, as the quoted parentheses indicate, from the narrating voice or consciousness *itself* (which at this point still claims to be identical with the author, writing in 2005).¹¹⁶ By plucking a thought directly from the mind of the authorial narrator, Sylvanshine's RFIs at once undercut that narrator's claim to stand outside the fictional world of the novel *and* weaken the novel's overall narrative hierarchy. Toon Staes has demonstrated that Wallace experimented with permeable narration¹¹⁷ in *Infinite Jest*, as Hal experiences Don Gately's dreams (Staes 420), but

¹¹⁶ "But this right here is me as a real Person, David Wallace...on this fifth day of spring, 2005" (TPK 66-7).

¹¹⁷ The "uncanny and inexplicable intrusion of the voice of another within the narrator's consciousness" (Richardson 104).

this intrusion adds metalepsis to the pattern established by permeable narration – exchanging thoughts not between two focalized characters, but between a focalized character and a separate focalizing voice, in this case the nominal author. Sylvanshine’s psychic (dis)ability, while it may render him a disorganized mess of aleatory sensations, reveals the narrative barriers of *The Pale King* to be even more porous than the “Author Here” sections would suggest.

To limit Sylvanshine to his Random Fact Intuitions, however, would be to ignore another key aspect of his psychology, ones that, like the RFIs, connect him to other characters and levels of telling. The most obvious is the way he processes fear, as on his plane’s approach to Peoria in Ch.1:

There must be some other way to deal with the knowledge of the disastrous consequences fear and stress could bring about. Some answer or trick of the will: the ability not to think about it. What if everyone knew this trick but Claude Sylvanshine? He tended to conceptualize some ultimate, platonic-level Terror as a bird of prey in whose mere shadow aloft the prey was stricken and paralyzed, trembling as the shadow enlarged and became inevitability....What if he was simply born and destined to live in the shadow of Total Fear and Despair, and all his so-called activities were pathetic attempts to distract him from the inevitable? (14)

Attempting to escape the attentional gravity of his concrete, low-level fact-intuitions, Sylvanshine leaps immediately to the opposite extreme, a plane of nearly ultimate abstraction (platonic forms). Though it would be tempting to ascribe all of Sylvanshine’s troubles to his most salient psychological feature (what he calls his one “marginal talent” [7]) this moment suggests something different: the Random Fact Intuitions may muddle Sylvanshine’s thinking,

but it is his attempts at self-reflection that prove genuinely shattering. The feeling recurs near the end of the chapter, when Sylvanshine looks out at Peoria's horizon in another bout of overwhelming introspection:

The panoramic vista....[created] an oceanic impression so literally obliterating that Sylvanshine was cast or propelled back in on himself and felt again the edge of the shadow of Total Terror and Disqualification pass over him, the knowledge of his being surely and direly ill-suited for whatever lay ahead, and of its being only a matter of time before this fact emerged and was made manifest to all those present in the moment that Sylvanshine finally, and forever, lost it. (24)

Though he first looks out on the “panoramic vista” in an attempt to distract himself from his interior life, Sylvanshine's attention redounds “back in on [him].” Unable to process even the most basic meta-awareness (what de Bourcier calls “recursion”) without sliding to the highest-possible levels of recursive abstraction (the “ultimate, platonic-level” of earlier), Sylvanshine breaks down like a computer program caught in an infinite loop.¹¹⁸ Apart from demonstrating his inability to process meta-awareness, Sylvanshine's collapse bears interest for another reason: the recurrence of its symbolic “bird of prey,” or, rather, the recurrence of its “shadow.” If the contents of his RFIs connect Sylvanshine to the narrating voice, then this repeated abstract image of a threatening winged creature links him to another of the novel's central low-level figures.

David Cusk's fears also manifest as an “overwhelming and terrible...winged thing” (92n1); but the two characters' formal and psychological parallels run deeper than that. Like Sylvanshine, Cusk suffers from a disability; but where the former's fact-psychosis prevents him

¹¹⁸ A computer malfunction that occurs when “a piece of program is executed repeatedly with no hope of stopping. This is nearly always because of a bug, e.g. if the condition for exiting the loop is wrong” (“Infinite Loop”).

from attending to much of anything, Cusk's disorder (anxiety over heavy sweating) renders him unable to escape attention. Cusk's anxiety exerts such overwhelming psychic pressure that it generates two kinds of textual splitting: First, a psychological split figured by the pervasive mirror-image motif that follows Cusk in Ch. 13; and second, a division between the narrating voice that follows the young Dave Cusk and the distant, clinical voice of the chapter's footnotes.

In his seventeenth year, Cusk first becomes "self-conscious about the whole sweating thing" (91). The anxiety resides not so much with the fact of sweating itself as with Cusk's nascent idea of others' reactions: "he started to imagine what his sweating might look like in class: his face gleaming with a mixture of sebum and sweat, his shirt sodden at the collar and pits, his hair separated into wet little creepy spikes from his head's running sweat." (92). Cusk imagines not just himself viewed mid-attack, but viewed at his worst, a distorted "funhouse...mirror" version of himself (96). The use of "creepy" is a clue, as the term traces to the pubescent Cusk's first intuition of "how [he] appear[s] to other people," and whether "there might be something creepy or gross" about him (92). The narration's jejune diction and relative verbal limitations hint at Cusk's inability to frame, understand, or control the ever-more frequent attacks. And this debility leads him to mirrors, in which he attempts to induce attacks without the attentional pressure of other eyes, but cannot (95n2). A particularly brutal moment of such mirroring occurs later, when Cusk malingers from a family trip, feeling "creepy and disgusting, as though his secret inner self was creepy and the attacks were just a symptom, his true self trying to literally leak out – though none of this was visible to him in the bathroom's glass, whose reflections seemed oblivious to all that he felt as he searched it" (99). The concatenation of "creepy," "reflection," and "self" intimate the recurrence of his earlier anxieties, this time in

connection with their source – the fear of an alien “self” within Cusk, one visible only to others, or to mirrors.

Cusk, however, is not the first to experience such mirror-centric anxiety (distinct nature of the case notwithstanding): so for the source of these episodes, we may look to the real-life Wallace’s personal library, which contained a heavily annotated copy of R.D. Laing’s existential psychology text *The Divided Self* (“Special Collections”). One passage in particular stands out as relevant to Cusk. To explicate his notion of self-consciousness, Laing provides the following gloss on Freud’s anecdote of a young boy who invents a game involving mirrors:

This identification of the self with the phantasy of the person by whom one is seen may contribute decisively to the characteristics of the observing self....[A self which] often kills and withers anything that is under its scrutiny. The individual has now a persecuting observer in the very core of his being. It may be that the child becomes possessed by the alien and destructive presence of the observer...occupying the place of the observing self, of the boy himself outside the mirror....[The] part of himself who looks into him and sees him, has developed the persecutory features he has come to feel the real person outside him to have. (Laing 117)

Laing’s example tells us why the desperate seventeen year-old Cusk gazes into a reflection that looks back, “oblivious” to the suffering he experiences. When he panics over how others see his sweating, Cusk responds not to those persons’ actual image of him, but rather to the “wither[ing]...scrutiny” of his own fantasies.¹¹⁹ Too socially paralyzed to investigate his coevals’ actual responses to him, Cusk can rely on only his “persecutory” imaginings of that self.

¹¹⁹ As happens during the examiner orientation in Ch. 27 (330).

These images, over time, burrow to the “very core of his being.” It should come as no surprise, then, that Cusk pictures that deepest, “true self” as beyond his power to assimilate: “something overwhelming and terrible, a winged thing breathing fire” (92n1).

So terrible is Cusk’s fear of his monstrous inner self that it produces a second kind of textual division – one at the level of narration. Chapter 13, the only one centered solely around Cusk, features two intercalated narrative perspectives: the narrating voice of the main text and the more clinical voice of the footnotes. The chapter’s main narrator works primarily in a free-indirect register that largely tracks the idiom, syntax, and conceptual limitations of the adolescent David Cusk: “High school became a daily torment, even as his grades improved even more, due to the increased reading and studying he did because it was only when he was in private and totally absorbed and concentrating on something else that he was OK” (96). Cusk’s private terminology for the attacks also emerges from sections written in this voice: “OK,” “creepy,” “weird,” and “shattering.” This primary voice does, at times, show hints of knowledge or connections beyond the ken of its adolescent focal character: it compares spreading body-heat to drinking brandy, and employs the term “primed,” (94) which is later revealed to be a term of art among REC examiners (540). But the differences end there. This voice remains tethered to the adolescent Cusk; his disorder remains as impenetrable to it as to him. And so it can isolate the essential problem – “fear” – but nothing beyond that: “knowing the fear was the problem was just a fact; it didn’t make the fear go away” (95-6).

So, as if to offer the solutions tantalizingly out of reach of this first voice, Wallace introduces another. This second voice, which inhabits the footnotes of Chapter 13, provides a running commentary on the chapter’s primary narrative, this time in psychoanalytically informed terms. Take, for example, its annotations to one of Cusk’s nightmares: “Under any reputable

Depth-based interpretation, a search-or-spotlight serves as a manifest dream-symbol of human attention....At clinical issue would be such questions as the dream-spotlight's source, the teacher-figure's status as either imago or archetype" (99n6). The vocabulary is distinctly psychoanalytic ("imago" and "archetype" both derive from Jungian psychoanalysis [Ducret]), and so the running commentary of the footnotes has the feeling of a clinical inventory, possibly accumulated by Cusk or the bewildered psychiatrist he consults in Chapter 40. But the differences extend further than that. Cusk, only a few years after the start of the disorder, acquires an extensive psychiatric vocabulary that does nothing to abate his attacks (322). Instead, we should look to an attitudinal difference, as hinted by the mention of "reputable" interpretations above, or in this moment from note 2: "In clinical terms, he was fighting to re-repress a truth that had been too long repressed in the first place, a confinement from which it had taken on far too much psychic energy ever....to be willed back out of conscious awareness. Consciousness just doesn't work that way" (93n2). The final sentence, with its declaratory tone and informal register, suggests something else; not just a knowledge of the terms involved, but the emotional distance and institutional familiarity to view the problem from a different perspective – something Cusk never acquires.

Thus Chapter 13 has something of a split structure; its two voices, both narrating the same common experience, remain at a narrative and textual distance, never combining or resolving. The vocal interplay is thus less dialectic (pointed toward a single, progressive resolution) than dialogic, a map of Cusk's own inner experience, plotted against the voice and perspective that he lacks. Vološinov is useful here. On one side, we see "the lowest, most fluid, and quickly changing stratum of behavioral ideology....To [it] belong all those vague and undeveloped experiences, thoughts, and idle, accidental words that flash across our minds. They are all of them cases of miscarriages of social orientations, novels without heroes, performances

without audiences” (Vološinov 92). Chapter 13’s main voice narrates the poorly organized chaos of the young Cusk’s inner life, an iterated mass of social “miscarriages” that prevents him from developing anything like the confidence or coherence of the second voice: “[t]he upper strata of [experiences], the ones linked with ideological systems, are more vital, more serious, and bear a creative character” (Vološinov 92). Cusk’s central struggle, as elaborated here, lies not so much with his inability to understand his psychic problems (he appends the requisite terminology to them rather easily), but rather to cope with them in the “creative” manner described above, one that shows not just a general knowledge of an ideological system, but an integration of its terminology and meanings so it may be appropriated in an individual way.¹²⁰

The narrative’s failure to integrate these two separate perspectives, further, brings us back to Deleuze’s notion of the fold. More pointedly, I have in mind Alain Badiou’s summary of the concept, or at least one aspect of it: “The fold is finally an *anti-Cartesian* (or anti-Lacanian) concept of the subject, a ‘communicating’ figure of absolute interiority[on this account] The world as such will no longer be the fantasy of the All, but the pertinent hallucination of the inside as pure outside” (Badiou 52). Badiou’s explication might as easily act as an explanation of Cusk’s central bifurcations: his self-conscious internalization of a phantom “other” which actually sources from within (Badiou’s “hallucination”), along with an inability to bridge inner and outer. David Cusk, via his divisions, may enter the first stage of the fold (a bifurcation or doubling), but like Claude Sylvanshine, he remains unable to continue the process that Deleuze lays out; the necessary “folding, unfolding, refolding” that follows (*The Fold* 137). Instead, he finds himself in the grips of a paradox: He “repeated....Franklin Roosevelt’s speech from US

¹²⁰ In this respect, the dual-voiced structure of the chapter might seem to recapitulate the two-floored structure that Deleuze ascribes to the baroque (*The Fold* 119); yet this chapter misses the final, crucial aspect of Deleuze’s two floors: “the upper floor” (the footnote-voice) would need instead to be “folded over the lower”; integrated into it (119).

History II in sophomore year: *The only thing we have to fear is fear itself*. He would mentally repeat this to himself over and over. Franklin Roosevelt was right, but it didn't help – knowing it was the fear that was the problem was just a fact; it didn't make the fear go away" (95-6). To understand the heart of Cusk's dilemma, we must move to the novel's next conceptual stage, to characters who seem to overcome psychic paradoxes of the sort that paralyzes Cusk (and, to some degree, his dual figure Sylvanshine).

IV. Meredith Rand – Adolescent Paradox and Institutional Language

With the narrative and philosophical peculiarities of Sylvanshine and Cusk's cases now outlined, we can move on to two characters who engage higher-order problems of the relationship between the self and the social: Meredith Rand and Chris Fogle. As she elaborates to Shane Drinion during their dialogue in Ch. 46, Meredith Rand also faces and, to a degree, overcomes a social paradox like the one faced by Cusk, and does so despite the failure of institutions tasked with "curing" her disorder. A "legendarily attractive but not universally popular" (446) figure in the Peoria REC, Rand reveals to Drinion that – shortly before her 18th birthday years earlier – she had spent several weeks admitted to a local mental institution for "cutting" (471). The relevant aspect of her case, what I will call the "prettiness paradox," becomes clear to her only when stated by the hospital attendant (Ed Rand) who has served as her informal therapist:

'He said....I wanted to be liked and known for more than just the prettiness. That I wanted people to look past the prettiness thing and the sexual thing and just see me for who I was, like as a person, and I felt really mad and sorry for myself that people didn't....But in reality everything was the surface....because under the surface were just

all these feelings and conflicts about the surface, and anger, about how I looked and the effect on people I had, and really all there was inside was this constant tantrum about how I wasn't getting saved and it was because of my prettiness...So, he said, I'd actually set it up so the only reason anybody *would* be attracted to me as a person was that I was pretty, which was exactly the thing that made me so angry and lonely and sad'. (499-500)

Rand's desirous persons, attracted to her "surface," bear some resemblance to Laing's "persecutory observer" that Cusk internalizes when imagining his "true self" (99). But the relationship is reversed: Where Cusk works desperately to contain what he imagines as his persecutory "true self," Meredith Rand posits a genuine self, inexorably walled off by her "pretty" carapace. Rand's paradox, however, has (for Wallace) a wider philosophical import than the one confronted by Cusk. And understanding why will mean looking to an earlier moment in Wallace's oeuvre.

In the 2001 short story "Good Old Neon,"¹²¹ Wallace features another character-narrator who encounters a more powerful variant of Rand's "prettiness paradox." Neal, the story's recently deceased protagonist, describes another "psychic trap" he discovered while at university, one whose implications ultimately drive him to suicide, the "fraudulence paradox":

The fraudulence paradox was that the more time and effort you put into trying to appear impressive or attractive to other people, the less impressive or attractive you felt inside – you were a fraud. And the more of a fraud you felt like, the harder you tried to convey an impressive or likeable image of yourself so that other people wouldn't find out what a hollow, fraudulent person you really were.

¹²¹ Originally published in *Conjunctions* 37, but collected in 2004's *Oblivion*.

The discovery of this “paradox,” in turn, leads Neal to a consequent realization, one that engenders an almost total psychic paralysis:

Logically, you would think that the moment a supposedly intelligent nineteen-year-old became aware of this paradox, he’d stop being a fraud and just settle for being himself (whatever that was) because he’d figured out that being a fraud was a vicious infinite regress that ultimately resulted in being frightened, lonely, alienated, etc. But here was the other, higher-order paradox, which didn’t even have a form of name – I didn’t, I couldn’t. Discovering the first paradox at age nineteen just brought home to me in spades what an empty, fraudulent person I’d basically been even since at least the time I was four.... (*Oblivion* 147).

For Neal, the ramifications of the fraudulence paradox – retrospective judgment of his own past “fraudulence” – metastasize to memories of his entire life. The fear of possessing no “true self” (*Oblivion* 162) drives Neal to sample, compulsively, activities that he believes might provide him one: “EST, riding a ten-speed to Nova Scotia and back, hypnosis, cocaine, sacro-cervical chiropractic, joining a charismatic church, jogging, pro bono work for the Ad Council, meditation classes, analysis, the Landmark Forum, the Course in Miracles....” (*Oblivion* 142-3). Yet none of these attempted “self-constructing” exercises works. Neal remains trapped in his inexorable sense of inauthenticity; not so much because of the initial (first-order) fraudulence paradox itself, but because of its “higher-order” variant listed above: Awareness of the first paradox’s existence doesn’t lead to its dissolution. Or, to adopt a phrasing that may lead us back to Meredith Rand’s case, diagnosing the paradox is not sufficient to cure it.

I have spent so long laying out Neal's situation not simply because it parallels that of Meredith Rand, but also because the two characters' divergent paths in the face of the same species of paradox (Neal's suicide, Rand's recovery) can help to throw important aspects of Rand's case into relief. First, like Neal, she encounters a version of the second-order paradox: "the big lie they all bought that made doctors and standard therapy such a waste of time...they all thought that diagnosis was the same as cure. That if you knew why, it would stop" (*TPK* 486). As in Neal's case, the second paradox arises from the fact that diagnosing a problem does not serve to obviate it. How she proceeds from here proves more interesting: Although clearly less intelligent than Neal, Rand (with the help of her attendant and future husband, Ed), manages to overcome this sort of higher-order (and perhaps more powerful) paradox. This solution takes several forms, the first of which is put to her (in rather blunt fashion) by her attendant: "You only stop if you stop. Not if you wait for somebody to explain it in some magic way that will presto change-o make you stop" (486). To paraphrase: Rand's solution lies less in the cognitive matter of understanding the sources of the "prettiness paradox" than in the attitudinal matter of changing her orientation toward it. Baskin provides a useful gloss in terms of Wallace's preferred philosophical sources: "The Wittgensteinian point would be that the problem was not with Rand's narcissism, but with her perspective on that narcissism – namely the perspective that made her narcissism into a much bigger and different kind of problem" (Baskin 147). While this interpretation of Rand's solution is wholly accurate, it also neglects an important aspect of her solution, one that connects her problem back to the social framework within which she lives and functions.

In order to overcome the "prettiness paradox" that causes her "cutting" and has led to her confinement in the Zeller clinic, Meredith Rand reorients her understanding of not only her

illness, but also of the social institutions that surround her, a philosophical repositioning that has implications for the novel's other voices. In Meredith's case, it helps that her moment of social epiphany comes from an outside source: her attendant. The psychiatric hospital, he tells her "was all an institutional structure, and once things became institutionalized then it all became this artificial like, organism and started trying to survive and serve its own needs just like a person, only it wasn't a person, it was the opposite of a person, because there was nothing inside except the will to survive and grow as an institution" (*TPK* 488). And this new understanding, of large-scale institutions as "organism[s]," with their own guiding imperatives, has particular relevance for a novel that takes place mostly during (and within) a large-scale re-organization of one of the US's central civic institutions.¹²² Leaving aside, for the moment, the IRS material, Ed Rand's somewhat off-hand remarks about institutions deserve unpacking.

John Searle is useful here. In *Making the Social World*, he offers an account of institutions as collectively organized structures for granting certain powers or privileges to certain groups. In brief, "the intuitive idea is that...creating and maintaining institutional facts is power, but the whole apparatus – creation, maintenance, and resulting power – works only because of collective acceptance or recognition" (103). On this picture, institutions such as Zeller serve as representations of collective intentionality, crystallizations of collective will and belief endowed with particular powers and limitations, and it is often possible for persons to become enmeshed in institutions without grasping their presence and structure. As Searle states later, this happens frequently: "in accepting the institutional facts, people do not typically understand what is going on. They do not think of private property...or human rights, or governments as human

¹²² As the authorial narrator describes it retrospectively in Ch. 9, "the couple of years in question here saw one of the largest bureaucracies anywhere undergo a convulsion in which it tried to reconceive itself as non-or even anti-bureaucracy....[It] was frightening; it was a little like watching an enormous machine come to consciousness and start trying to think and feel like a real human" (*TPK* 80fn19).

creations. They tend to think of them as part of the natural order of things, to be taken for granted” (Searle 107). So Ed Rand’s analogy may turn out to be somewhat misleading.

Institutions such as Zeller do take on the self-organizing behavior of “organisms” or machines, but in coping with them, Meredith Rand also copes with the same sort of collective intentionality that stands at the heart of her “prettiness paradox.”

Thus, when Meredith comes to her own realization about escaping Zeller later on in the monologue, it bears significance beyond just the mental hospital she temporarily inhabits. And what is most remarkable about this insight comes not from its attitudinal movement, but in the language employed: “. . .all that matters is not to do it. To cut it out. Nobody else can make me cut it out; only I can decide to stop it. Because whatever the institutional reason, it’s hurting myself, it’s being mean to myself, which was childish. It was not treating yourself with any respect. The only way you can be mean to yourself is if you . . . expect someone else is going to gallop up and save you, which is a child’s fantasy” (*TPK* 506). The surprising moment here comes not in Meredith’s judgment of her own “childish” nature (as on Baskin’s account), but rather in the division she makes between “institutional reasons” and what I will call “personal reasons.” Given, as shown above, that institutions are representations of collective intentionality and social interest, then Meredith’s coining this new distinction shows her adding a new feature to her own social ontology, and thereby finding a way to re-carve the relationship between the self and the wider social world. Whereas, while still in the throes of the “prettiness paradox” she found her entire life oriented around her projections and imaginations of others’ responses (collective intentionality), here she recasts that orientation, rendering the two domains more independent than before, and thereby walling off the valuation of the self from the social –

recognizing that the two were confused before. Significantly, this division – between personal and institutional reasons – is one that Wallace’s Neal never achieves in his lifetime.

For Neal, the primary barrier to such a realization inheres in his understanding of the relationship between language and the self. Neal, while alive, never moves beyond the sense that language permits him to show “only one little part of what it was like” (*Oblivion* 152). And it is only after his death that Neal comes to realize “public language” only allows for the articulation of part of the self. So, to turn back to *The Pale King*, it would seem that Meredith Rand’s case calls for some optimism, that it shows Wallace’s characters confronting the despairingly postmodern dilemmas that frustrated the voices of his earlier works, and finding new ways of living authentically; that Meredith and Ed Rand might offer straightforwardly moral examples to Wallace’s readers.

However, to accept that point would credit too much Meredith Rand’s assessment of her own case. As Baskin points out, that Meredith eventually marries her attendant suggests that – for all the self-awareness she achieves in leaving Zeller – she has fallen into the emotional trap of “transference” by falling in love with her caretaker, an “inherent danger” in therapy of any kind (Baskin 146). A move which demonstrates Wallace’s awareness of the provisionality and contingency of the philosophical therapy Meredith undergoes with Ed Rand (Baskin 147). But this acute account neglects an important detail. Baskin’s mention of “transference” directs us back to the earlier distinction Rand made between “real” and “institutional” logic. Whereas at that point, she had aimed to divide “personal reasons” from “institutional reasons,” the repeated incursion of “transference” – a psychoanalytic concept straight from Zeller’s institutional lexicon – marks the collapse of that division. Whether she recognizes it or not, the institutional facts that Meredith Rand attempted to dissever from her interior definition of self nevertheless saturate that

same self; institutional and systemic forces override the power of existential choice and realization. And the overall pattern of Meredith Rand's story has a companion in that of the novel's other central character-narrator (the second of what I am calling the novel's intermediate figures), Chris Fogle.

V. Fogle's Existential Turn

Like Meredith Rand, "Irrelevant" Chris Fogle works as a low-level examiner at the Peoria REC and delivers an extended monologue that comprises an entire chapter. Both characters find themselves overwhelmed by issues of meta-representation, fall into "adolescent" responses, and then recover. However, Fogle's example adds to Rand's pattern dimensions of political and philosophical importance; beyond embodying an adolescent psychic pattern, Chris Fogle's personal problems point back to Wallace's sources in postwar American politics and existentialist philosophy. If *The Pale King* has a central allegorical figure, it is Chris Fogle, and his pattern of nihilism, conversion, and implied failure form a central piece of the novel's overall argument.

Similar to Claude Sylvanshine, Chris Fogle spends much of his story curiously alienated from the contents of his own mind. Near the opening of his long, biographical monologue, he recalls that as a child, "I went through a sudden period where I couldn't read. I mean that I actually could read....But for two years at Machesney, instead of reading something I'd count the words in it" (160). The young Fogle thus finds himself not overwhelmed by data so much as unable to coordinate first-order data (the words he reads) with their second-order meta-representations (the numbers representing those words). In Deleuze's terms, Fogle fails to order his perceptions as something he *has*: the proper relation of thinking is less the Cartesian "I am

thinking” than the Leibnizian “I *have* diverse thoughts” (*TF* 110). Fogle recovers from this bout of recursive illiteracy, but his difficulties coordinating perception and object persist, and Deleuze’s Leibnizian language of thought-as-possession provides a useful frame for the problems that follow.

The bulk of Chapter 22 centers on an extended description of Fogle’s “wastoid” adolescence, spanning his extended undergraduate experience, and characterized by an inability to organize his values (and even his perceptions) within a coherent conceptual framework. Although he describes himself as having drifted through university courses “where everything was fuzzy and abstract and open interpretation” (155), the nature of his recall is most telling. Memories from this time are mostly disembodied objects:

the things I can remember now seem mostly pointless....I can remember things I wore – a lot of burnt orange and brown, red-intensive paisley, bell-bottom cords, acetate and nylon, flared collars....The commercial psychedelia. The obligatory buckskin jacket.....‘Male chauvinist pig,’ women’s lib,’ and ‘stagflation’ all seemed vague and indistinct to me during this time. I don’t remember what I did with all my real attention, what-all it was going towards. (157)

The same holds for persons, denominated more by their accoutrements than by themselves, “I can remember my father’s hat now almost better than his face under it” (159). This metonymic cascading of memories-as-fragments stems not from any problem in Fogle’s perceptual apparatus, but rather from a total inability to link his perceptions or ideas under a guiding conceptual framework.

Fogle describes himself at this time as a “wastoid,” or “the worst kind of nihilist” (154). And for den Dulk, Fogle’s attitude resembles Kierkegaard’s aesthetic ironist, a figure who embraces a “total negative irony,” an ironic attitude so powerful and all-consuming that it “is no longer a means to overthrow hypocritical, unquestioned truths, but rather an instrument of cynicism that makes it incredibly difficult for individuals to realize a meaningful life” (den Dulk 48). Thus Fogle’s “nihilistic” ironism undermines any potential beliefs to which he might commit, leaving both his ethics (and his perceptions) completely unmoored from any foundation, any “single-entendre” convictions (*A Supposedly Fun Thing* 81). Deleuze’s description works equally well, although on somewhat different terms. If Sylvanshine and Cusk approach the bare meta-awareness or folding of animal monads, the adolescent Chris Fogle seems somewhat worse off, unable even to connect his aleatory perceptions together as part of himself, what Deleuze terms a “bare entelechy” (*TF* 118); less a thinking or animal monad than a loose collection of perceptions: “neither a subject nor a predicate, but” rather a “crowd or mass” of disorganized intuitions and data (*TF* 117). Fogle, of course, manages to escape the trappings of this diffuse, youthful nihilism, and does so initially by learning to control his scattered sensations.

This cognitive control comes first from a bodily source: drug use. Surprisingly, for Fogle recreational drugs have less a euphoric function than a therapeutic one. Describing an experience with his youthful favorite – the amphetamine Obetrol – he moves beyond his previous cognitive instability: “I would be articulating all this to myself, very clearly and consciously, instead of just drifting around having all these sensations and reactions...without ever being quite aware of them” (186). But in the moments that follow, when Fogle provides a higher-order interpretation of what this “awareness” means, his rhetoric shifts: “Meaning it wasn’t all fun and games. But it did feel *alive*, and that’s probably why I liked it. I felt like I actually *owned* myself” (186). The

economic language implied by “owned” stands out. As Godden and Szalay argue, this shows Fogle adopting a financialized model of self: “In his scrupulous attention to Fogle’s phenomenology, Wallace locates the financial logic ‘internal’ to his efforts at self-modification, efforts whereby...he may ‘feel alive’ through abstraction” (Godden and Szalay 1295). On this argument, Fogle’s language of rental and ownership shows the later (narrating) Fogle of 1985 imposing the values of the IRS onto the language of his earlier (narrated) life: “Fogle ‘doubles himself’” in order to “[save] the IRS and the nation considerable expenditure” (1294). While I agree that Fogle’s language derives from an economic model of self, his language of ownership also derives from another strain in Wallace’s thinking, one that proves particularly relevant for understanding the “conversion” that Fogle undergoes toward the end of his autobiographical narrative.

Fogle’s financialized description of Obetrol as permitting him to “own” himself points to another of Deleuze’s forms of doubling or folding, one that leads us outside the realm of the purely economic: “To have or to possess is to fold, in other words, to convey what one contains ‘with a certain power’” (*TF* 110). And this notion of folding as conveying something internal to the subject points us back to Fogle’s disorganized perceptual fragments: For Chris Fogle, “[owning]” of the “realer” aspects of himself (*TPK* 186) will mean exercising control over the novel’s prime resource – attention. And mere focus does not suffice: “past a certain point, the element of choice of attention in doubling could get lost, and the awareness could sort of explode into a hall of mirrors” (*TPK* 188). The mention of “choice” further links Fogle’s concerns to those of Wallace’s 2005 Kenyon Address: “Learning how to think means learning how to exercise some control over *how* and *what* you think. It means being aware enough to *choose* what you pay attention to and to *choose* how you construct meaning from experience. Because if

you cannot or will not exercise this kind of choice in adult life, you will be totally hosed” (qtd in Max 285). The registers of the two quotations match almost exactly, highlighting how the problem that Wallace poses to his audience of new university graduates echo those of Fogle at the point of this realization: not just paying attention, but choosing a set of values that might guide the way in which he apports that attention.

And the path along which Fogle proceeds has a somewhat familiar outline, gesturing back toward both Wallace’s existentialist sources and his own earlier writings. Fogle begins with the realization that the nihilistic ironism that has governed his life as a “wastoid” is “singularly unuseful” as a source of the values he seeks (*A Supposedly Fun Thing* 67): “I knew...I might be a real nihilist, that it wasn’t just a hip pose. That I drifted and quit because no one choice was really better. That I was, in a way, too free....I had somehow chosen to have nothing matter” (*TPK* 223). As Camus writes, Fogle has an “absurd experience,” and thus recognizes the “absence of any profound reason for living” (Camus 6). And this frightening confrontation with the depths of his own ironism “primes” him for the revelation of a new set of values. Fogle receives the religious experience he desires, which comes from an unlike source – an accounting professor. The “Substitute Jesuit” leading the final day of the Advanced Tax course delivers an extended (and rather grandiose) “hortation” in which he extols the virtue of the accounting profession: “True heroism is you, alone, in a designated work space. True heroism is minutes, hours, weeks, year upon year of the quiet, precise, judicious exercise of probity and care – with no one there to see or cheer. This is the world. Just you and the job, at your desk” (230). The Substitute Jesuit’s alleged status as priest, along with his resemblance to Fogle’s recently deceased father, help to create what Boswell points out is essentially a Jamesian mystical experience for Fogle (Boswell, “Taxes” 478). Similarly, both Baskin (149) and den Dulk have

noted the influence of Kierkegaard on the Jesuit's speech, so it comes as little surprise that the "hortation" moves Fogle to make Kierkegaard's leap from ironism to ethical commitment (den Dulk 58). And he does so by aligning his values with those of the IRS.

Within the frame of Fogle's 1984 recounting of his conversion experience to the IRS, the philosophical path he sketches seems a felicitous one. As he notes, reflecting on his younger self: "I was a child really. The truth is that most of what I really know about myself I learned in the Service. That may sound too much like sucking up, but it's the truth. I've been here five years, and I've learned an incredible amount" (*TPK* 165). Here we see that Fogle has not merely taken a position in the service; he has become one of the "low-level True Believers on whom the Service depend[s] so heavily" (271n17). Fogle thus completes the ideal existentialist progress, from dissolute "wastoid" self to moments of anxiety and despair, and finally to a re-shaping of his values around those of the institution he serves. And like Meredith Rand, he seems to have come to an accommodation between his own values and those of the institution around him, a balance and meaning within his life.

Yet Fogle's story continues beyond the boundaries of Ch. 22's monologue, and the fragments Wallace (and Pietsch) includes elsewhere suggest a darker ending. As the authorial narrator figure of Dave Wallace notes in a footnote from Chapter 24, Fogle is later the victim of a "great injustice," likely being fired for using amphetamines to improve his focus as an examiner (271n17). More ominously, another series of footnotes and retrospective comments by the narrator-Wallace state that the IRS in the late 1980s underwent a massive reorganization (apparently an exaggerated version of the real-world Tax Reform of 1986). In this reorganization, low-level human examiners are replaced by "computers with a high-powered statistical formula known as the ANADA" (68n3). Further, narrator-Wallace writing in 2005

recalls that this reorganization “eliminated” the branch of the Peoria REC to which Fogle has pledged his life: “Peoria was a REC, one of the seven hubs of the IRS’s Examinations Division, which was precisely the division that got eliminated....by the advent of the ANADA and a digital Fornix network” (68n3). Not only does Fogle likely lose his job, but the materials to which he *chose* to direct his attention and the standards which he “construct[ed] meaning from experience” (Max 285), those values shared by IRS examiners and embodied in the voice of Peoria REC head DeWitt Glendenning, have vanished. Thus the very institution whose ideals and imperatives Fogle has “chosen” to make parts of his deep and “realer” self, no longer exists; the vision of the IRS as the “lifeblood” of US Civic obligation has been abandoned, overruled by a market-driven reorganization of the Service.

We should be careful not to read this example in isolation. What happens to Fogle ramifies beyond his individual case, marking a rhetorical movement that contradicts the message of Wallace’s other writings around this time, especially the Kenyon address. Chris Fogle, having abandoned youthful nihilism after experiencing anxiety and despair, follows the pattern suggested in the Kenyon address nearly exactly. Near the end of that address, Wallace states¹²³:

[The] so-called real world of men and money and power hums merrily along in a pool of anger and fear and frustration and craving and worship of self. Our own present culture has harnessed these forces in ways that have yielded extraordinary wealth and comfort and personal freedom....[But the] really important kind of freedom involves attention and awareness and discipline, and being able to truly care about other people and sacrifice for them over and over in myriad petty, unsexy ways every day. (“Transcription”)

¹²³ Language matching that of Substitute Jesuit’s speech almost exactly

Fogle follows these principles almost to the letter, and yet he finds himself deprived of his avenues for “care” and “awareness” by market forces that endorse the “anger...and worship of self” described above. Like Meredith Rand, he finds his personal reorganization overridden by institutional shifts that extend beyond him; he can no longer “own” or organize his perceptions and thoughts in the way he had. I want to suggest, therefore, that the “injustice” that befalls Fogle also shows Wallace beginning to come to terms with problems inherent in the arguments of his Kenyon address. It is as if Wallace, writing near the beginnings of the Financial Crisis of 2007-8, had realized that his address’ message, of finding modes of personal authenticity within a world overwritten by modern financialized capitalism, no longer sufficed.

VI. Authorial Intrusion, Metafiction, and Systemic Representation

Having laid out the examples of the novel’s most sophisticated individual character-narrators as they wrestle with crises of self-consciousness and institutional place, we can now follow their thread to a higher narrative level. Which brings us to the author, or at least the character and narrating voice that serve as his fictional avatars. Our first encounter with “David Wallace” occurs in the novel’s ninth chapter (named “Author’s Foreword”) where he asks readers to dismiss the book’s legal disclaimer as a “pro forma boilerplate” because the entire text of *The Pale King* is “not fiction at all, but substantially true and accurate” – a memoir labelled as fiction only at the behest of a nervous publisher (67). The intrusion of an “authorial” voice marks the novel from this point as metafiction, “writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its question to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (Waugh 2). But this is nothing stylistically new (Boswell calls it “hackneyed” [“Author Here” 26]), and it seems an especially odd choice for a writer who made his name decrying metafictional irony’s tyrannical grip on American audiences

(*ASF* 67). But Wallace would have anticipated this response, and so the fact that he chose to make a shopworn metafictional trope so central to *The Pale King* means that we should focus less on its presence, and more on what it permits the novel to do. Cusk and Sylvanshine first showed consciousness beginning to double on itself, a process to which Fogle and Rand added social awareness; and so the presence of a “David Wallace” carries this folding operation up to the level of the narration itself.

As the narrating Dave Wallace begins to recount his biography (which resembles but does not match that of the real-world Wallace), beginning with the circumstances that led to his time as an examiner at the Peoria REC in 1985, the outlines of a distinct persona emerge. Raised in a home “like a for-profit company, [where] you were pretty much only as good as your last sales quarter” (*TPK* 257), the in-text David Wallace channels the market-driven ethos of Reagan-era America to the point of parody, exemplifying Randy Martin’s notion of the “investor-citizen” (Godden & Szalay 1277). He is sent home from his private college for what he calls the “conservative” enterprise of selling essays to other students and only enters the IRS in order to defer student loan repayments (75-8). To this market-orientation he adds a penchant for untranslated Latin phrases¹²⁴ and the atavistic Calvinist habit of labelling those he sees as his social inferiors the “preterite” (298). It comes as little surprise when another character compares him to one of the more odious figures from *The Waste Land* (286n40). Thus if Wallace is offering an image of himself, it seems to be a distorted and unpleasant one, an instance of self-parody. I would suggest that this is deliberate; Wallace clearly realizes, as McHale states, that the “ontological barrier between an author and the interior of his fictional world is absolute,

¹²⁴ Among them: “*sine damno*” (79), *Deos fortioribus adesse* (81n21), *Hiatus valde deflendus* (283n36), *Mendacem memorem esse oportet* (78n15).

impenetrable” (215), and so this unpleasant textual avatar must serve another function.¹²⁵ For now, it can serve as a background against which to examine the changes that occur later in the novel, as aspects of this voice begin to slip away.

In Chapter 24, the longest of the “Author Here” sections and the one detailing Wallace’s travel to and first day at the Peoria REC, both the character of David Wallace and his position as narrative authority begin to break down under the pressure of institutional chaos. This begins when (in another moment of obvious metafictional parody) the chapter’s signs refuse to refer. The initial examples are innocuous: In Wallace’s service vehicle, mandatory dashboard signs that block the windscreen by their physical presence (274), 4-H Farm Safety billboards too ubiquitous to demand attention (275). On closer examination, however, Wallace notices something more troubling: the signs within the service vehicle refer to nothing outside themselves; a bureaucratic error has caused “the sign’s cited [regulation] referred to the sign itself and not the regulation the sign was supposed to signify” (274n21). Then, in an extended bit of Saussurean comedy, signs turn lethal: 4-H signs, we learn in a footnote, were discontinued two years later after decapitating a farmer (275n23). At the REC itself, they seem at war: the ineffectiveness of “crude signs made up of tented manila folders” cause the intake line to become “small-scale reenactment of the fall of Saigon” (283). Inside, even the reassuringly indexical “You Are Here” of the ground floor maps indicates the wrong “Here,” its reference literally undermined by the excavation of a new floor several years earlier (296n49).

Comic though they may be, the semiotic failures David Wallace encounters derive from serious causes. The traffic outside and chaos of the intake doors result from Merrill Lehl’s

¹²⁵ At least part of this may be to play upon and attack his own public image as a sage, an image with which he was always uncomfortable (Max 287).

reorganization of Compliance Branch as part of IRS efforts to increase revenue (279n31); and the obsolete floor maps cause such embarrassment for the facilities staff that they work to “allay and diffuse responsibility for the signs’ not having been caught and amended years before” by generating a “cloud of internal memos and cc’s so involved and opaque” that it takes years for even a dedicated administrator to penetrate (296n49). By stepping into the REC, Wallace has entered a semantic minefield, a space where the competing forces of collective interests and the incoherent institutional decrees they generate render language unstable or broken. The “institutional stupidity,” that Wallace first believed he encountered in the traffic outside the facility turns out to stem from the complexity and difficulty of local politics; and in this sense, the REC serves as a physical microcosm or *mise-en-abyme* of larger democratic processes. And the most powerful of these semantic distortions – the only one the novel marks out as “ontologically” significant (295) – acts upon the narrating Wallace himself.

Where the proliferation of signs and referential failures mark the REC as a metafictional space or area of semantic instability, the insertion of an “ontological” foregrounds the in-text Wallace’s status as fictional object, and predicts the variety of dangers he will encounter within. Once inside, David Wallace (hereafter “Foster Wallace”) receives his own institutional sign, a “laminated ID card” with a name, bar code, government service pay rank, and “nine-digit sequence of numbers” that dissevers him from a previous piece of his social identity: “my old Social Security number...would never again be used by anyone; it simply disappeared, from an identification standpoint” (298). While the issuance of a new Social Security number is standard practice within *The Pale King’s* imaginary IRS, there’s a further problem: the information on the card, “ontologically speaking,” belongs to a different IRS employee, an older and elite examiner named David Francis Wallace. In an error known as a “ghost redundancy,” the narrating David

Wallace explains in a footnote, “the Personnel computer systems...made a conflation error...in effect collapsing [David Francis Wallace] into me” (307n67). In terms of arrival date, this seems accurate, but as Godden and Szalay point out, the narrator-Wallace has actually “disappeared within Francis Wallace, ‘an older, high value’ version of himself” (1278). In terms of legal identity (Social Security Number) and institutional role (GS rank, occupation), the narrating David Wallace has, temporarily, ceased to exist: In Searle’s terminology, the brute facts of his bodily existence have been severed from the institutional facts of his official identity. While this might seem to place too high a value on a minor computational error (Foster Wallace is eventually assigned his own role within the organization), the moment of the ghost-redundancy actually marks the opening of a larger semiotic fissure *within* the in-text Foster Wallace, whose narrative voice and diegetic body begin to drift apart.

This David Wallace resurfaces in several other chapters but does so with a distinctly diminished narrative profile. The “author” assertion recurs only once (and without “here”), in the explanatory notation of Ch. 38, where it is relegated to a footnote (414n7). He moves further away from the novel’s narrative center as the book goes on: in his brief appearance in Ch. 27, David Wallace appears as one small part in a larger cast of minor characters (including Cusk and Sylvanshine), narrated by a depersonalized exterior voice (334). Although he does appear in another first-person section, Chapter 43, this narrator is clearly a changed man. The voice of Ch. 43 makes no claim to serve as an authorial proxy, and even seems to have adopted a familiar position among the novel’s other character-narrators: After arriving late to the office, he surveys the coffee room: “

[T]he coffee room smelled sour, which meant that Mrs. Oooley hadn’t cleaned out the pots and filters before clocking out last night. It was a personnel goldmine in there,

however. Mr. Glendenning and Gene Rosebury were drinking coffee out of their complimentary Service mugs (for GS-13s and up) and Meredith Rand was eating a cup of yogurt out of the GS-9 refrigerator with a plastic fork (which meant that Ellen Bactrim was hoarding spoons again). (432)

This brief excerpt is dense with accrued information: names of coworkers, their habits, accoutrements, ranks, and potential sources of office rumors. David Wallace, if he stands out at all, has clearly absorbed the day-to-day protocols and concerns of life at the Peoria REC.

The changes, however, extend beyond altered work-habits and a hunger for office gossip; the in-text Wallace seems to have reoriented large portions of his civic and personal values. His attitude toward the REC Director, DeWitt Glendenning, clues us in: It moves from a generalized regard for a competent administrator (“I didn’t know a person at the Post who didn’t like and admire DeWitt Glendenning”), to a more personal liking for his fashion choices (“Mr. Glendenning was also a man of style, the sort of man whose clothes hang on him just right even after he’s ridden in cars”), and finally into an actual “fantasy” (434-5). The details of this “fantasy” prove even more revealing: In it, Wallace helps Glendenning overcome an “administrative dilemma” by offering a “solution that will both relieve the examiners and...send the odious Merrill Lehl packing” (435-6). This seems the wrong way around. Only a few chapters earlier, the character-Wallace, the capitalist investor-citizen, derided government bureaucracy as “massively wasteful and inept” (301), while praising the “ingenious” advances of “entrepreneurial capitalism” (258), attitudes which would seem to place him firmly in the camp of Merrill Lehl, leader of the Peoria REC’s efforts to push the Service toward a “market model” (83). Yet his fantasy involves working with Lehl’s institutional opponent, representative of the “traditional...officials who saw tax...as an arena of social justice and civic virtue” (82-3). Working at the REC has reshaped not only

Wallace's day-to-day habits and concerns, but even his ambitions and, it would seem, his politics; he has taken on the language, practices, and values of the IRS.

We have no way of knowing what might have happened to this figure had the real David Foster Wallace lived to complete *The Pale King*. But among the "Notes and Asides" that append the novel, Pietsch includes a telling fragment: "David Wallace disappears – becomes creature of the system" (546). This would seem to validate – and perhaps extend – the pattern outlined above. The character of David Wallace claims unique authorial status and displays a distinct identity, yet sees these qualities gradually stripped away and altered as he becomes absorbed by the physical and social spaces of the Peoria REC and the IRS. Boswell and McHale see this note as another of Wallace's borrowings from Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, where the protagonist Tyrone Slothrop disintegrates near the novel's end (Boswell, "Author Here" 33). While this comparison seems largely warranted, there remains a crucial difference between the two figures: Tyrone Slothrop never claims to be Thomas Pynchon, never claims to wield narrating authority over the text's other voices. In *The Pale King*, the "disappear[ance]" of David Wallace shows the institution (and institutional conflict) that the novel represents, the IRS, ensnaring the power of narration itself.

VII. *Mise-en-abyme* and the Heart of the Matter

To recall, this essay opened with two primary and interrelated claims. First, that *The Pale King* involves an attempt to represent not only a gargantuan and multivalent institution (the IRS), but that institution during a process of reflexive self-consideration and ultimate reconception. This transition involves both an "operational battle over human vs. digital enforcement [of tax law]" along with a deeper conflict over the metaphysical and moral status of the US tax system

(82-3). Second, I claimed that, in order to carry out the rather staggering task of representing the aforementioned institutional “convulsion” (80n19), Wallace adopts a baroque narrative form; that is, a set of narrative structures intensely conscious of their own effects, containing an inner symmetry that belies the chaotic ordering of the outer chapters, and has at its core a concern with self-or-meta-representation,¹²⁶ in Wallace’s case, a self-awareness that extends beyond purely aesthetic concerns.

We have seen the development of this core concern, one that follows less the external order of the novel’s chapters or chronology than a gradual development of an abiding concern across various levels of personal and social complexity. At the lowest levels, both Claude Sylvanshine and David Cusk struggle to control their own attention and focus, unable to organize the contents of their own minds in a socially engaged way. In the more intermediate cases of Chris Fogle and Meredith Rand, such psychic issues are, to a degree, subdued by a set of sustained existential realizations, leading eventually to social and moral commitments beyond the self: In Rand’s case, to marriage, and in Fogle’s, to a career in the Service. The Case of the in-text David Wallace adds to these dimensions a metafictional aspect, as Wallace’s parodic metafictional awareness and eventual integration into the IRS precipitate a corresponding inward turn of the novel’s focus. If all of these examples have shown individuals attempting to reflect on their inner lives or their roles within their social and institutional milieus, then we can now turn to the text’s final instances of such foldings - a group of figures, images, and parables - which complete the pattern established earlier by showing the text attempting to represent (and hence reconsider) itself.

¹²⁶ Lambert’s *mise-en-abyme* at the heart of the “baroque design” (Lambert 4).

These various instances of *mise-en-abyme* prove particularly germane for representing what Wallace calls the Service's "convulsion," as the IRS is itself a textual entity. de Bourcier explains: "the Service is *constituted*, like a grammar, by the rules which govern it and the documents in which they are set out. A written text is uniquely able to represent such a system," and so *The Pale King*'s form is distinctly "congruent with its subject matter" (de Bourcier 42). To this we may add Searle's notion of institutions as the products of collective intentionality: Institutional facts are created to maintain certain powers, and the institutions responsible for their "creation, maintenance, and resulting power – [work] only because of collective acceptance or recognition" (Searle 103). To the extent that lower-order moments of meta-awareness arise in the novel (as with Cusk and Fogle), they echo the larger-scale social and institutional reorganizations that forms the novel's core. These intimations of large-scale self-awareness open the gates for higher-order self-representations, culminating in the extremely abstract images that model the Service's attempts at introspection.

The simplest comes, as noted earlier, in the form of the Peoria REC, whose absurd and inefficient physical space serves as a nexus for conflicts between the institutional inefficiencies of the IRS (at both internal and larger, governmental levels) and the countervailing imperatives of private interests (citizens' groups, conflicts with state government, competing individual desires). A more obvious allegory occurs in the narration of Ch. 44, when an unnamed former cart-boy (one of the low-ranking administrative personnel of the REC) reflects on his time at the IRS as a period when he discovered the "truth" of modern life:

"That the world of men as it exists today is a bureaucracy," and the "underlying bureaucratic key is the ability to deal with boredom.....The key is the ability, whether innate or conditioned, to find the other side of the rote, the picayune, the meaningless, the

repetitive, the pointlessly complex....It is the key to modern life. If you are immune to boredom, there is literally nothing you cannot accomplish. (437-8)

This is a small-scale instance, but it resonates powerfully with arguments advanced elsewhere in the text. For instance, the speaker's mention of finding "the other side" of the "picayune, the meaningless, the repetitive" echoes the dangers listed by Fogle's substitute Jesuit in Ch. 22 ("Routine, repetition, tedium, monotony, consequence, abstraction...these are the true hero's enemies" [231]). His assertion of reality's bureaucratic structure, and of the ability to endure boredom as a central coping skill, also has a political dimension, as DeWitt Glendenning argues in Chapter 19, admonishing a subordinate who finds serious political discussion boring: "Sometimes what's important is dull. Sometimes it's work. Sometimes the important things aren't works of art for your entertainment" (138). Most interesting, however, is a claim the former cart-boy advances most casually: that the world itself has adopted a bureaucratic structure. While this might exaggerate certain features of postmodern social life, it certainly applies within the world depicted in *The Pale King*, and points us to the novel's most profound attempt at self-representation.

Wallace makes this moment easy to overlook, or at least to undervalue. It occurs in Ch. 10, which follows the lengthy "baroque" (80n19) involutions of Ch. 9 (the first "Author Here" section) and opens with a comic epigram from a fictional court case. It's only if we look past the looming suggestion that this is another of the novel's humorous "compensations," or respites from tedium (Warren 392), that we uncover, beneath a familiar analogy, its dense and intertextual set of metaphoric associations:

[T]he truth is that such a bureaucracy is really much more a parallel world, both connected to and independent of this one, operating under its own physics and imperatives of cause. One might envision a large and intricately branching system of jointed rods, pulleys, gears, and levers radiating out from a central operator such that tiny movements of that operator's fingers are transmitted through that system to become the gross kinetic changes in the rods at the periphery. It is at this periphery that the bureaucracy's world acts upon this one....The crucial part of the analogy is that the elaborate system's operator is not himself uncaused. This bureaucracy is not a closed system; it is this that makes it a world instead of a thing. (86)

The analogy turns the cart-boy's metaphor on its head: The world itself is not bureaucratic in structure; rather, that structure itself constitutes its own world, one standing apart from – but not independent of – the external world (“this one”). *The Pale King* could be described as an attempt to adumbrate this bureaucratic structure, and thus the central image of an “operator,” manipulating an “intricately branching system” stands as a near-complete figure for both the IRS and of the book itself, which represents various levels of this “intricately branching system.” The “parallel world” figure thus serves as the novel's equivalent of Achilles' shield, laying out a small-scale image that comments on its surrounding world.

And to unpack the implied message of the rod-and-pulley image, we must look closer. If, as the portrait states, the IRS constitutes a “parallel world,” with a “central operator” who causes all in-world events, then we might call that figure (the first cause of all its actions) this “world's” god – the god of the IRS. This association might seem unwarranted were it not for the novel's repeated mention of a “god” at the center of the Service. As one examiner explains, “The DCS is part of what's known as the Three-Personed God, the...term for the top triad of

Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner for Systems, and Chief Counsel. The three top spots in the Service organization” (108). The Trinitarian allusion is obvious, but why the anachronistic “three-personed”? A closer look leads us to an intertext, Donne’s “Holy Sonnet XIV,”¹²⁷ which opens:

Batter my heart, three-person’d God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o’erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.

Donne’s speaker cries out for his heart’s renewal at the hands of the “three-person’d God,” a request whose source becomes clear in the ensuing stanza:

I, like an usurp’d town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv’d, and proves weak or untrue. (Donne)

Here the speaker reveals the nature of this moral crisis: *akrasia*. Fittingly, Donne’s apostrophic subject asks not for the strength to overcome temptation, nor for that temptation’s absence, but for a divine intervention that would absolve him of any agency, any responsibility: “Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.” Donne’s praying subject begs for salvation, but only the sort that

¹²⁷ To avert the sense of this association as totally random: When asked in an interview to name the writers who had most inspired him, Wallace lists Donne as second only to Socrates (Burn 62).

might be delivered against his will. On a literal reading, Donne's speaker's attitude toward his "three-person'd God" mirrors the stance Glendenning attributes to American voters around 1980, only with government standing in place of the deity: "Voting'll be unhip: Americans now vote with their wallets. Government's only cultural role will be as the tyrannical parent we both hate and need" (TPK 147). To substantiate Wallace's ideological mapping, we must look to the other valences latent within this complex image *en abyme*.

So, to follow the argument made so far, the "three-person'd God" has found a straightforward correlate within *The Pale King*, but what of Donne's repeatedly invoked "heart"? For an answer, we may look to the Service's own metaphors. In the 1984 IRS training video that involves several of the novel's main examiner characters (Fogle, Hindle, numerous unnamed sources), an opening voiceover makes clumsy attempts to lay out the IRS' national role: "your IRS is the largest law enforcement agency in the nation. But it is more. In the body politic of the United States of America, many have likened your IRS to the nation's beating heart, receiving and distributing the resources which allow your federal government to operate" (101). Now to superimpose: If Donne's sonnet asks a three-personed god to rescue the speaker's heart from an akratic (or adolescent) pattern, then an analogous reading would see Wallace's Ch. 10 *mise-en-abyme* also arguing for another three-personed god (the governing minds of the IRS, with whom the novel's central debate reside) to rescue an akratic heart (the IRS, as itself an instrument of the American sense of community and civic obligation)¹²⁸ from its own myopic desires. The incomplete fragments of *The Pale King* claim a position in the intra-agency battle on which they center, and their clearest case arises from a message buried in the novel's form itself: the

¹²⁸ I should add here that the novel projects the tax code *itself* as a microcosmic image of American life: "The tax code,' Glendenning says, 'embodies all the essence of [human] life: greed, politics, power, goodness, charity'" (82). The layerings

Service's move to a profit-oriented model, and the changed attitudes toward government that subtend it, constitute a large-scale civic *akrasia* of the sort described by Donne's speaker.

Wallace's concentric images, and the intertext buried at their center, cry out against this change.

VIII. Final Reflections

I began my investigation into *The Pale King's* nature as a baroque text because its plot and narrative form so neatly resemble Deleuze's final description of the Leibnizian baroque cosmology: a universe comprised of different orders of partially aware monads, struggling toward greater self-consciousness, and ultimately comprising a great two-storied structure whose two floors represent the physical and the spiritual, connected via the fold. Deleuze writes, "For Leibniz the two floors are and will remain inseparable; they are really distinct and yet inseparable by dint of a presence of the upper in the lower. The upper floor is folded over the lower floor. One is not acting upon the other, but one belongs to the other, in a sense of a double-belonging" (*TF* 119). In Wallace's novel, these monads are matched by examiners and the two floors (with their attendant fold) by the ultimate outcome of the Glendenning-Lehrl conflict: A spiritual (conceptual) shift in the orientation of the service which manifests ("fold[s] over") as a physical shift (from human to digital examiners). However, as the preceding essay has demonstrated, the novel's myriad foldings extend beyond this abstract picture.

Wallace does take as the novel's lodestone the problems of self-consciousness, at levels both psychological and aesthetic, and his work might be seen as an attempt to forge a baroque postmodern. Following Borges' account of the baroque as a "final stage" of art characterized by parody, Wallace's novel both deploys and mocks the metafictional techniques pioneered by his postmodern forbears Thomas Pynchon and John Barth. However, Wallace's deployments of

these postmodern differ in that he adopts these techniques at a much later date, with full awareness of the potential charge of imitation or belatedness, confronting (in Borgesian fashion) what Barth in “The Literature of Exhaustion,” calls the “felt ultimacy” of postmodern technique, the sense that fiction might have reached a dead-end (Barth 67). However, where Barth in that essay primarily praised Borges for turning metafictional techniques toward greater ontological complexity, *The Pale King* uses self-aware fiction to turn in another direction.

Wallace’s self-aware aesthetic techniques direct his reader’s attention to the real-world counterparts of the institutions around which the novel centers: *The Pale King*’s most extreme and self-aware metafictional moments (the meta-images, David Wallace’s loss of identity and subsequent changes) all collapse into sustained looks at the Service itself – its role, nature, and the ideals that motivate its eventual metamorphosis. Furthermore, Wallace’s version of the IRS and the arguments around which it is reorganized map closely onto their real-world counterparts in the twenty-first century.¹²⁹ Wallace’s writing had always possessed a serious social concern, but *The Pale King* shows a political dimension that places it alongside his increasingly polemical nonfiction of the 2000s (“Deciderization,” “Host,” “Up, Simba”). If the foregoing study has opened any doors for future investigation, I think one might consist in reading Wallace’s aforementioned evolution alongside the career of another author, one whom Wallace evoked often late in his life, and whose oeuvre also developed gradually from works examining individual reflection to those promoting ethical and political engagement – Albert Camus.

¹²⁹ Boswell has argued this point at length (“Trickle-Down Citizenship”).

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